



NATIONAL DRAGSTER[®]



★ ISSUE 23
★ VOLUME 57
★ NOVEMBER 18, 2016
★ www.nhra.com

VEGAS, BABY

Brown clinches third Top Fuel title as Las Vegas event sets table for season finale

NOTES FROM THE PRO MOD REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

BY JIM LUIKENS

For the third time in the last four years, **Rickie Smith** is the NHRA J&A Service Pro Mod Drag Racing Series champion. Those three titles are part of the 11 total that Smith has earned during his long and successful career. However, this is the first title Smith has won by leading the points chase from start to finish. Smith won the season-opening Pro Mod event in Gainesville and never looked back.

When pressed about his future, Smith did hint that he plans to drive one more season (as of now) before turning the driving chores over to someone younger. He's looking forward to the day when he can concentrate on just his tuning, which is where the "big money" is according to him.

Interestingly, Smith added that with the 2016 title narrowly clinched after qualifying on Saturday, he had considered sitting out race day on Sunday. He was concerned that an oil-down by him might trigger enough of a points deduction to allow second-place Troy Coughlin back into the title chase. He finally chose to enter Sunday's race when mathematics showed he would still prevail if Coughlin won the race and he had an oil-down.

For the record, Coughlin did everything this season except win the title. He recorded three wins and three low e.t.s of the



meet, both of which were season highs for the class. On race day, he recorded consecutive winning elapsed times of 5.787, 5.776, 5.796, and 5.814, running more than 250 mph on each pass. He went on to record his third win this season and finished No. 2 in the points standings.

By this time of the season, there is usually not much to report about new cars and teams. However, there were a couple of interesting new items in Las Vegas. **Mike Castellana** debuted his '16 Mustang, the first of the new-generation Mustangs to appear in NHRA Pro Mod competition. New-car blues kept him out of the field; his best elapsed time of 6.040 seconds was only good enough for the No. 21 position on the qualifying sheets.

Having a little better luck was **Clint Hairston**, the new driver

of the Jim Bell Camaro. Hairston qualified in the top half of the field with a strong 5.911-second elapsed time. He ran a 5.923 to defeat Steven Whiteley in the first round before falling to Whiteley's father, Jim, in the second stanza. The long-term future of the Bell

and Hairston duo is yet to be determined.

The field was evenly split with eight classic body styles and eight modern muscle cars making up the 16-car field. The busiest person on the property had to be **Brad Personett**, who was tuning three cars. In addition to the Bell/Hairston car, Personett tuned the cars of **Shane Molinari** and **Mike**

Bowman. Impressively, all three cars qualified for the field.

Speaking of Bowman, despite appearing in only two Pro Mod events this season, he recorded top speed of the meet at both. Bowman followed up his 256.89-mph best at Indy with a 255.53-mph best at the Las Vegas event.

Michael Biehle was the speed king this season, recording top speed of the meet three times at the Pro Mod races. Despite no final-round appearances, Biehle recorded a fourth-place finish in the points standings based on his consistent mid-round finishes. Strong rumors persist that another Biehle family member will be joining his team next season in a second Biehle team car.

This year, six different drivers won the 10 Pro Mod events. This is in marked contrast to last season when 10 different drivers recorded the 10 Pro Mod wins and points champion Coughlin earned none. **NHRA**



PRO MOD

- Sidnei Frigo, Sao Paulo, Brazil ('16 Corvette) **5.829, 250.92**
- Michael Biehle, North Vernon, Ind. ('67 Mustang) **5.848, 251.86**
- Troy Coughlin, Delaware, Ohio ('15 Corvette) **5.851, 251.20**
- Bob Rahaim, Grosse Pointe, Mich. ('15 Corvette) **5.868, 244.56**
- Todd Tutterow, Yadkinville, N.C. ('69 Camaro) **5.876, 244.87**
- Michael Bowman, Oak Hills, Calif. ('69 Chevelle) **5.898, 255.00**
- Rickie Smith, King, N.C. ('15 Camaro) **5.909, 245.00**
- Clint Hairston, Tulare, Calif. ('69 Camaro) **5.911, 247.47**
- Steven Whiteley, Grand Junction, Colo. ('14 CTS-V) **5.917, 245.76**
- Danny Rowe, Laguna Hills, Calif. ('16 Corvette) **5.929, 244.87**
- Kevin Rivenbark, Wallace, N.C. ('15 Corvette) **5.940, 238.05**
- Shane Molinari, Battle Ground, Wash. ('68 Firebird) **5.950, 251.06**
- Khalid alBalooshi, Marina del Rey, Calif. ('68 Camaro) **5.950, 242.80**
- Pete Farber, Baldwinville, Mass. ('69 Daytona) **5.957, 243.99**
- Steve Matusek, Olathe, Kan. ('68 Camaro) **5.959, 244.52**
- Jim Whiteley, Grand Junction, Colo. ('69 Chevelle) **5.959, 242.23**

ALTERNATES: Rick Snavelly - 5.970, 250.55; Eric Latino - 5.979, 243.19; Kenny Lang - 6.004, 241.84; Mike Knowles - 6.036, 237.92; Mike Castellana - 6.040, 198.88; Clint Satterfield - 6.073, 241.28; Ray Martin - 6.124, 231.56.

PRO MOD CHAMPION TROY COUGHLIN			
5.835-251.16 (FOUL) FRIGO (-.246)	5.907-243.41 J. WHITELEY (.026)	5.910-250.60 BIEHLE (.030)	5.856-250.92 BIEHLE (.039)
5.925-242.32 J. WHITELEY (.030)	5.925-243.41 (FOUL) J. WHITELEY (-.025)	17.428-45.93 (FOUL) SMITH (-.096)	5.928-243.55 MATUSEK (.038)
5.923-246.53 HAIRSTON (.067)	5.932-246.21 HAIRSTON (.056)	5.874-246.26 SMITH (.008)	5.906-245.36 SMITH (.015)
6.214-244.25 S. WHITELEY (.026)	6.018-233.92 TUTTEROW (.027)	5.814-250.78 COUGHLIN (.041)	5.949-244.34 ROWE (.047)
5.868-244.65 RAHAIM (.045)	8.256-122.49 RAHAIM (.090)	5.776-252.76 COUGHLIN (.044)	5.787-252.10 COUGHLIN (.030)
5.925-243.46 ALBALOOSHI (.043)	5.840-245.40 TUTTEROW (.029)	5.796-252.80 COUGHLIN (.009)	9.414-111.57 FARBER (.069)
5.884-243.72 TUTTEROW (.016)	5.947-242.63 TUTTEROW (.024)	5.961-237.67 RIVENBARK (.009)	5.909-255.53 BOWMAN (.138)
5.909-252.00 MOLINARI (.091)			5.980-228.00 RIVENBARK (.014)

LOW E.T.: 5.776 - COUGHLIN
TOP SPEED: 255.53 - BOWMAN