



# NATIONAL DRAGSTER

ISSUE 13 ★ VOLUME 58 ★ JUNE 30, 2017 ★ www.NHRA.com

## ShEE's Back!

Enders breaks victory drought with Epping driving tour de force



### EASTERN SWING KICKOFF

EPPING: Brittany Force, Hagan, Enders lead New England winner's list

ENGLISHTOWN: Beckman, Savoie grab season firsts; Torrence, Anderson score again

# NOTES FROM THE PRO MOD REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

BY JIM LUIKENS

**T**hey're back! After an early season that was dominated by the supercharged entries, the nitrous and turbocharged Pro Mod competitors have now clawed their way back to an equal position. The NHRA J&A Service Pro Mod Drag Racing Series has always prided itself on equality between its three power adders, but it seemed like the supercharged entries might have been just a little more equal to start the 2017 season. The supercharger overdrive allowance of 20 percent was recently reduced to 16.5 percent with dramatic results at the NHRA Summernationals.

In qualifying, the top-eight competitors' entries were turbo, turbo, supercharged, nitrous, turbo, nitrous, supercharged, and nitrous-assisted. Although each contending will claim they were the underdog, these results prove otherwise. The numbers were further supported by a final round that featured a nitrous versus turbo battle with the nitrous-assisted car ultimately prevailing.

And it wasn't just any nitrous believer — it was **Rickie Smith**, who hasn't been seen since Gainesville due to health issues. In his first race back since his forced sabbatical, Smith qualified 10th and then powered his way to the final round, where he defeated a resurgent **Troy Coughlin Sr.**



Carl Stevens Jr.

Smith's race day almost ended in the first round. He left the starting line with a -.059 red-light, and that usually ends your day on the spot. Fortunately for Smith, his opponent, Eric Latino, recorded a -.070 red-light, which was worse than Smith's -.059 foul and made Smith the winner.

By the way, **Jonathan Gray**, who had been driving for Smith during his time off, was in Englishtown driving Smith's second car. Gray's race day didn't last as long as Smith's when he bowed out to Coughlin in the first round.

After a strong start to the 2017 season, Coughlin had a first-round loss and a DNQ to show for his last two outings coming into the Summernationals, but he bounced back in Englishtown, qualifying No. 1 with a 5.772-second run at 257.53 mph. He parlayed that pole position into a final-round appearance, where he finished as the runner-up to Smith. This was Coughlin's second No. 1

qualifier of the year; he also qualified No. 1 at the NHRA Four-Wide Nationals in Charlotte, where he advanced to the final round as well.

The marriage of Jim Bell and **Von Smith** didn't last very long after all. After just two races together, Bell showed up at the Summernationals with **Carl Stevens Jr.** driving his car. In his debut outing as a driver, Stevens qualified a surprisingly strong fifth with a 5.813 e.t. In the first round of eliminations, Stevens lost to Steve Matussek. Smith is an excellent driver with great credentials, and I expect him to pop up somewhere else sooner rather than later. In fact, it could

be as soon as the next race in Bristol.

**Shane Molinari** continued his hot hand at New England Dragway by qualifying a season-best No. 2. In eliminations, Molinari defeated Mike Janis before falling to Rickie Smith in the second round. For the fourth time this season (out of six races thus far), Molinari set top speed of the event for the Pro Mod class with a 258.42-mph run. For the record, he has successive top speeds of 257.24, 257.48, 258.32, and 258.42 mph. There's no doubt that the all-time Pro Mod top speed record of 258.71 mph is in his sights.

After winning two events recently with his nitrous-equipped '15 Corvette in other racing series, Whitestone, N.Y.'s **Dean Marinis** made his NHRA Pro Mod Series debut at the Summernationals. A qualifying-best 6.001 e.t. left him 22nd on the final qualifying sheet and out of the starting field.

**Harry Hruska** has been making impressive stride after impressive stride so far this season as a driver.

In Englishtown, however, his upward trajectory hit a slight speed bump when a transmission failure led to a significant fire in his car. Look for Hruska to make a quick return to the NHRA Pro Mod Series.



Dean Marinis

## PRO MOD

1. Troy Coughlin Sr., Delaware, Ohio ('15 Corvette) . . . . . **5.772, 257.53**
2. Shane Molinari, Battle Ground, Wash. ('68 Firebird) . . . . . **5.781, 258.42**
3. Steven Whiteley, Grand Junction, Colo. ('14 CTS-V) . . . . . **5.795, 251.72**
4. Bob Rahaim, Grosse Pointe, Mich. ('14 Camaro) . . . . . **5.796, 249.86**
5. Carl Stevens Jr., North Haledon, N.J. ('69 Camaro) . . . . . **5.813, 257.97**
6. Shannon Jenkins, Tuscaloosa, Ala. ('16 Mustang) . . . . . **5.817, 248.48**
7. Eric Latino, Port Perry, Ont. ('69 Camaro) . . . . . **5.822, 251.91**
8. Khalid alBalooshi, Dubai, United Arab Emirates ('17 Camaro) . . . . . **5.827, 249.30**
9. Danny Rowe, Laguna Hills, Calif. ('15 Corvette) . . . . . **5.827, 249.07**
10. Rickie Smith, King, N.C. ('17 Camaro) . . . . . **5.832, 249.86**
11. Sidnei Frigo, Sao Paulo, Brazil ('16 Corvette) . . . . . **5.841, 253.56**
12. Steve Matussek, Olathe, Kan. ('68 Camaro) . . . . . **5.847, 251.02**
13. Steve Jackson, Evans, Ga. ('17 Camaro) . . . . . **5.851, 247.75**
14. Mike Castellana, Oyster Bay, N.Y. ('17 Camaro) . . . . . **5.858, 250.18**
15. Mike Janis, Lancaster, N.Y. ('16 Camaro) . . . . . **5.863, 245.58**
16. Jonathan Gray, Artesia, N.M. ('17 Camaro) . . . . . **5.877, 249.63**

ALTERNATES: Michael Biehle - 5.897, 253.42; Jim Whiteley - 5.910, 246.93; Larry Morgan - 5.913, 249.53; Chuck Little - 5.917, 245.94; Pete Farber - 5.989, 249.95; Dean Marinis - 6.001, 235.31; Doug Winters - 6.013, 238.22; Harry Hruska - 6.329, 218.30; Clint Satterfield - 7.199, 148.76.

