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McNIFICENT!

Terry McMillen finally earns first Top Fuel win; Hagan, Anderson, Krawiec also score in Las Vegas

2018 Pro Mod, Lucas Oil Series schedules announced

NOTES FROM THE PRO MOD REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

BY JIM LUIKENS

Troy Coughlin Sr. is the 2017 NHRA J&A Service Pro Mod Drag Racing Series champion. He sealed the season title with his second-round victory over Mike Castellana, the only other Pro Mod racer in contention for the championship. The 2017 season continues a very impressive run by Coughlin, who has finished first or second in NHRA Pro Mod points every season since 2012.

Stevie "Fast" Jackson won the Pro Mod Wally at the NHRA Toyota Nationals when Coughlin encountered trouble in their final-round matchup. For Jackson, it was his fourth final of the season and his second win. His two wins tied him with Coughlin, who also had two victories, for most wins of the season in the series.

Shane Molinari continued his hot hand by securing the No. 1 qualifying position with a 5.801-second e.t. For Molinari, it was his third pole of the year to go along with his class-leading six top speeds of the meet in 12 Pro Mod events this season. During eliminations, he was ousted in the second round by Harry Hruska, but later that evening at the Pro Mod championship banquet, Molinari was named the Most Improved Driver of 2017.

We didn't add any additional body styles to our already record 2017 count, but two drivers

Rick DiStefano

did make their 2017 debuts. Longtime Pro Mod competitor **Rick DiStefano** from Canada and Montana's **Derek Menholt** attempted to qualify for the Las Vegas event. Although both failed to make the field, they did increase the number of different drivers who have competed in a J&A Service Pro Mod Series event this year to 44. The 44 different drivers mark ties the all-time series high for number of different drivers in a single season.

However, both new drivers fared better than **Eric Latino**, who suffered a devastating crash when he hit both guardwalls during a qualifying attempt before coming to a stop far downtrack. For Latino, it was doubly disappointing because his car was slated to appear in his sponsor's booth at the SEMA Show the following week. Latino emerged from his car quickly, and conversations have already begun about a replacement car.

The driver of the race had to be **Dan Stevenson**, who qualified a season-high No. 2 with a 5.804 and reached the semifinals for his best finish of the season. Stevenson only ran at seven of the 12 events this year after taking some time off early in the season to further develop his combination. His turnaround started in Indy and then continued through St. Louis, where he qualified sixth with a 5.769-second elapsed time, his best e.t. of the season.

Derek Menholt

California's **Michael Bowman** only competed at four NHRA Pro Mod events this year; however, at two of those events, he recorded the top speed. At the NHRA Toyota Nationals, Bowman had the honor of recording not only the top speed of the meet but also the top speed of the year when he set a new class national speed record with a 259.91-mph pass. Despite all his high-speed heroics, Bowman was a nonqualifier in Las Vegas, where his 5.980-second e.t. was only good enough for 19th on the final qualifying sheet.

The number of full-time '68 Firebirds competing in the series could be cut in half next year when **Clint Satterfield** debuts his new Larry Jeffers-built '18 Camaro. Hopefully, the rumored arrival of **Melanie Salemi** and her '68 Firebird will equalize the loss of Satterfield.

Michael Biehle recorded the best reaction time of eliminations with a .012-second light in his first-round loss to Rickie Smith. Jackson recorded the second- and third-best reaction times of eliminations, .022 and .026, on a day that did not see many great lights.

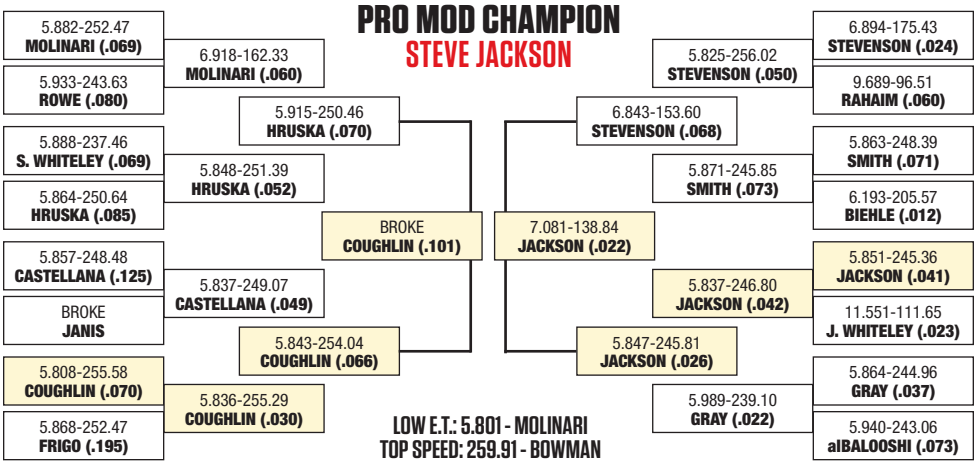
It was also announced at the championship banquet that E3 Spark Plugs is the new series sponsor starting next season. Current series sponsor J&A Service will continue as the presenting sponsor in 2018.

PRO MOD

1. Shane Molinari, Battle Ground, Wash. ('68 Firebird) . . **5.801, 255.10**
2. Dan Stevenson, Bolingbrook, Ill. ('16 Camaro) **5.804, 255.19**
3. Steve Jackson, Evans, Ga. ('17 Camaro). **5.823, 245.99**
4. Mike Castellana, Oyster Bay, N.Y. ('17 Camaro) **5.839, 248.61**
5. Troy Coughlin Sr., Delaware, Ohio ('15 Corvette). **5.848, 254.47**
6. Jonathan Gray, Artesia, N.M. ('17 Camaro) **5.869, 245.72**
7. Rickie Smith, King, N.C. ('17 Camaro). **5.876, 247.38**
8. Steven Whiteley, Grand Junction, Colo. ('14 CTS-V) . . . **5.879, 245.49**
9. Harry Hruska, Hebron, Ind. ('14 Camaro) **5.884, 249.58**
10. Michael Biehle, North Vernon, Ind. ('67 Mustang) . . . **5.896, 251.95**
11. Khalid alBalooshi, Dubai, United Arab Emirates ('17 Camaro). . . **5.896, 245.23**
12. Sidnei Frigo, Sao Paulo, Brazil ('16 Corvette) **5.899, 250.69**
13. Mike Janis, Lancaster, N.Y. ('16 Camaro) **5.908, 242.32**
14. Jim Whiteley, Grand Junction, Colo. ('69 Camaro) . . . **5.914, 245.90**
15. Bob Rahaim, Grosse Pointe, Mich. ('14 Camaro) **5.915, 243.63**
16. Danny Rowe, Laguna Hills, Calif. ('16 Corvette) **5.918, 244.52**

ALTERNATES: Chip King - 5.942, 243.06; Steve Matusek - 5.969, 243.90; Michael Bowman - 5.980, 259.91; Mike Knowles - 6.002, 234.17; Billy Harper - 6.024, 236.84; Rick Distefano - 6.143, 232.47; Derek Menholt - 6.180, 235.89; Clint Satterfield - 6.235, 240.17; Carl Stevens - 6.277, 244.12; Eric Latino - DISQ.

PRO MOD CHAMPION
STEVE JACKSON



LOW E.T.: 5.801 - MOLINARI
TOP SPEED: 259.91 - BOWMAN