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YEARS



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NOTES FROM THE PRO MOD REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

BY JIM LUIKENS

It was yesterday all over again for **Rickie Smith** in Richmond. After three first-round losses in the first four E3 Spark Plugs NHRA Pro Mod Drag Racing Series events of 2019, Smith showed up in Richmond with his venerable nitrous '67 Mustang instead of the turbocharged '19 Camaro that he has been using so far this season. The results weren't a whole lot different: Smith was once again a first-round loser. Inside scuttlebutt says that Smith will be back in his nitrous car in Topeka.

I've talked some this season about Canada's **Eric Latino**. In Richmond, he really had something to write home about. After experiencing three first-round losses and a DNQ in his first four races this year, Latino nearly put it all together here. He advanced over heavy hitters Mike Janis and Jose Gonzalez in the first two rounds of competition before facing eventual Richmond winner Sidnei Frigo in the semifinals. Frigo barely advanced over Latino, 5.820 seconds to 5.849 seconds in their pairing. Frigo's win propelled him into the finals, where he defeated Stevie Jackson on a holeshot.

Someone else who had a great weekend in Richmond was **Steve Matussek**. Matussek qualified for his first NHRA Pro Mod event of the season and then went all the way to the semifinals. Matussek defeated **Chad Green**



Rickie Smith

in the first round and faced No. 1 qualifier Khalid alBalooshi in the quarterfinals. Matussek's great .024-second reaction and 5.829-second elapsed time was enough to hold off alBalooshi's quicker 5.804-second run. These results come at a good time for Matussek; the tour heads to his home track, Topeka, for the next Pro Mod event in the series.

Green and his team had a race weekend that they won't forget anytime soon. Green was unqualified going into the fourth and final Pro Mod qualifying session of the weekend. Battling weather conditions that were worse than what his other competitors had faced in their best qualifying sessions, Green roared to a 5.817-second elapsed time and a great ninth place starting spot. Many believe that was the run of the year for that team.

Race day didn't turn out quite as well for the Green team. A

first-round loss to Matussek sent Matussek on his way to a great day while the Green team returned to their pits for the rest of the event. Green did stay over for Monday testing and recorded a quick elapsed time that sets him up well for the Topeka event.

Jackson continues to turn my scorecard black with great results. Jackson made it to another final round here, his third final in the five Pro Mod events this season. In Richmond,

Jackson notched his second runner-up of the year to go along with his Houston victory. I color my score boxes black to record No. 1 qualifier, low e.t., top speed, winner, or runner-up of each race, and all I can say is that Jackson has a whole lot of black around his name right now.

A highly anticipated first-round match was Jackson against Smith. However, they both staged up relatively quickly, and the race was on. Jackson was the winner when Smith slowed to an 6.678-second elapsed time at only 168.91 mph.

Almost as highly anticipated was the second-round match of the No. 1 and No. 2 drivers in the points race. This turned out to be a dandy of a race with both drivers knowing exactly what was on the line. Jackson was able to barely prevail over Todd Tutterow by the thinnest of margins, 5.773 to 5.801 seconds. Their reaction times weren't bad either with Jackson's .012 slightly better than Tutterow's .025.



Steve Matussek

PRO MOD

- Khalid alBalooshi, Duxbury, Mass. ('19 Camaro) **5.774, 257.28**
- Sidnei Frigo, Sao Paulo, Brazil ('69 Camaro). **5.774, 256.02**
- Mike Janis, Lancaster, N.Y. ('69 Camaro) **5.776, 248.39**
- Todd Tutterow, Yadkinville, N.C. ('68 Camaro) **5.783, 249.30**
- Steve Jackson, Evans, Ga. ('18 Camaro). **5.789, 250.04**
- Jose Gonzalez, Ball Ground, Ga. ('17 Camaro) **5.793, 258.47**
- Mike Castellana, Muttontown, N.Y. ('17 Camaro) **5.797, 249.12**
- Steve Matussek, Olathe, Kan. ('13 Mustang) **5.817, 257.58**
- Chad Green, Midland, Texas ('19 Camaro) **5.821, 250.78**
- Alex Laughlin, Bluff Dale, Texas ('18 Camaro) **5.828, 257.04**
- Jeremy Ray, Lugoff, S.C. ('63 Corvette) **5.829, 246.12**
- Rickie Smith, King, N.C. ('18 Camaro). **5.836, 248.93**
- Brandon Snider, Atmore, Ala. ('16 Corvette) **5.836, 244.25**
- Eric Latino, Port Perry, Ont. ('67 Camaro) **5.854, 247.88**
- Chip King, Roxboro, N.C. ('70 Charger) **5.858, 249.58**
- Erica Enders, Houston, Texas ('18 Camaro) **5.876, 256.65**

ALTERNATES: Steven Whiteley - 5.893, 247.84; Doug Winters - 5.906, 244.83; Chuck Little - 5.980, 240.29; Clint Satterfield - 6.176, 244.16; Bob Rahaim - 7.456, 125.23; Harry Hruska - 7.571, 209.01.

