

Still Ramblin'

words & photos Mike Collins
Xtreme crop mix



fires, an' flames an' nitro funder!

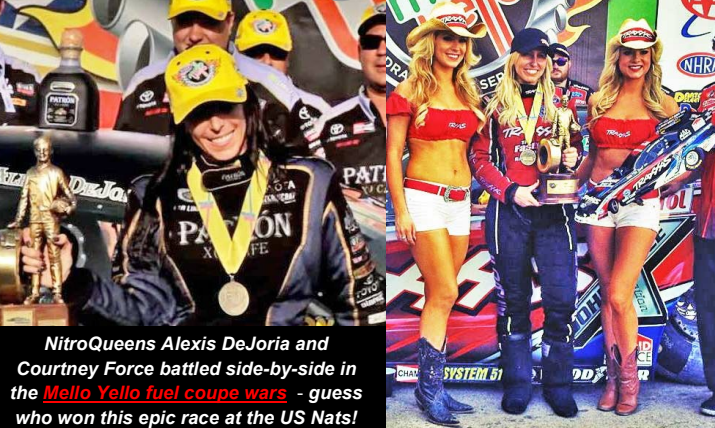
...on the cleanest '59 El Camino you've never seen - and won't as this feature missed the boat! Click it to see an original 1959 TV commercial

...with an in-depth look at a fiery Top Fuel final that has [three lead changes!](#)



mcSnip courtesy NHRA YouTube

Plus gals - an' pals...



NitroQueens Alexis DeJoria and Courtney Force battled side-by-side in the **Mello Yello fuel coupe wars** - guess who won this epic race at the US Nats!

mcSnip courtesy TJenkx6 YouTube

Due to circumstances beyond my control - and hi-tech gremlins, this edition of Still Ramblin' was w-a-y late and truncated; now in September 2020 it's been sanitised for your protection! However, we're sure you will still enjoy this PC Redacted, Eurodragster edition from my Ramblin' series first published at American Autoparts back in 2014



Oh! Nitro Nostrils is seen here doing his thing, shootin' fuel coupes at Santa Pod where they kicked off their annual September showdown with the first Friday night

Top Fuel Q-session seen LIVE on SantaPodTV! Wojtek took his big gun to the Pod on race day, hunting for cool action shots from yet another VIP perch! He'd just celebrated 10 fun-filled years as AAP's main man, yet instead of chillin' out on a Saturday afternoon, he's busy directing traffic! He also grabbed this ground-pounding shot on race day; part of our in-depth coverage of the 2014 FIA Finals, while yours truly shot from the stands and other places ...

And also enjoyed the Xtra buzz off my pair of AA Fuel Zippos; both runnin' strong!



What about my truck pix?



Photos By Wojtek



mcPix



mcSnip courtesy SantaPodTV



PC Redaction



Speedway babes do it in the dirt!

Speedway Grand Prix racing was great this year, the bodacious babes struttin' their stuff before each heat adding to our viewing pleasure!



Photo by Wojtek

But first some real NitroThunder! And at 10,000 horsepower per, even on the short track, NHRA's Mello Yello blown an' injected fuel racing is just that - even in a PedalFest, as you'll see next...



DREW SKILLMAN



Nitro Fever!

Mello Yello Drag Race Series photos courtesy nhra.com
mcPix courtesy ESPN



The quality and quantity of nitro thunder from the NHRA's Mello Yello racers this past summer was AA amazing, ending with a couple of intense events as racers battled to make the elite Countdown field

No doubt they all enjoyed a week's break after such a gruelling tour, but for me, a weekend without racing was a bit of a bummer, so by the time I sat down to watch qualifying for the penultimate race of the regular season, Brainerd's Lucas Oil Nats I was craving for nitro action. And they didn't let me down, starting with their race logo with that NitroFire dancin' on the header pipes...

Fuel coupe qualifying at Brainerd was led by John Force Racing. Courtney took the first pole with a 4.15 at 306.40 in her Traxxas Mustang and Robert Hight took the next with a 4.08 at 313.29 in his Auto Club Mustang. Most cars went up in smoke during Saturday's first Q session, and then only three pairs of fuel coupes (led by Del Worsham's 4.11 at 307.44), made it down track in the final session before the heavens opened, with the teams taking their cars back to their pits, where they sat for about an hour. The best thing about watching delayed TV coverage is that all we suffered was a quick commercial break and the rain had stopped! DSR's TJ and his Make-a-Wish Dodge led the way with a 4.078 at 309.27, a tick ahead of Alexis DeJoria's 4.082, 306.12 in her Patrón Toyota. But then DSR team mate Ron Capps thundered to a 4.064, 314.17 alongside Tim Wilkerson's 4.154, 302.89, a three thou' improvement for the likeable owner driver. Jack Beckman's 4.115 at 309.70 looked good alongside Bob Tosca's 4.154, then it was Matt Hagan's turn to thunder, his 4.068 at 311.99 moving the DSR Rocky Boots Charger to second as Courtney Force clicked off her Traxxas Mustang after bad tyre shake.



Mark Gewertz photo courtesy nhra.com

The best race of the day was all Force Power, with 11-time Brainerd winner John Force's 4.060 snatching his 151st pole at 315mph in a booming side-by-side race, with team mate Robert Hight's 4.081 only good enough for fifth! It was Force's third pole in 4-races - not bad for an 'ol' truck driver! It was also Castrol GTX Mustang crew chief Jimmy Prock's 96th pole - talk about a winning combination. Round one on Sunday saw DSR's Matt Hagan step up to the plate and hit one out of the park with a blistering 4.01, 318.99 in his Rocky Boots Charger to run away from Chad Head's 4.088 315.93 in his Head Racing Camry. Following a short rain delay, Alexis DeJoria thundered around an up-in-smoke Courtney Force, re-setting Hagan's track record ET with a blistering 4.010 at 317.64! The big race next round was a "Countdown critical" match between a pair of DSR Charger's.



MARGIN OF VICTORY: .0039 sec.			
BECKMAN	RT	DE JORIA	HOLESHOT WIN
.096	ET	.090	
4.046	MPH	4.049	
317.57		317.79	

Wow; 6-thou at the tree is close! Don't forget folks, we do it Manga style; that's from right to left...

Ron Capps NAPA car and Jack Beckman's Valvoline backed machine. Capps hit a 0.090 light to holeshot Beckman's 0.096, "Fast Jack" moving past as the pair thundered side-by-side. It was still anyone's race in the lights, but Capps' NAPA car inched ahead in the final couple of feet, taking the win with a 4.049, 317.79 to Beckman's 4.046, 317.57 - wow! In losing that close battle (MOV 0.0039!), Beckman remained one round out of the Countdown race - talk about straight-shooting! It also meant Courtney Force clinched her Countdown spot as did Alexis DeJoria, and Matt Hagan, that pair giving fans a great race next. Hagan put his DSR Rocky Boots Charger ahead at the green, but Alexis got up and thundered by, giving Brainerd fans their first three second race, her 3.998 at 315.93 eating Hagan's 4.056 at 318.77mph.

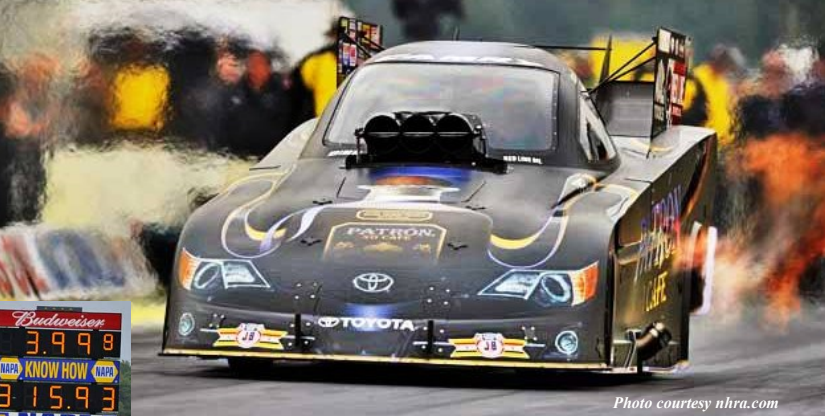


Photo courtesy nhra.com

Courtney and Brittany Force looked on nonchalantly as Alexis staged, but reacted when she ran the numbers, especially Brittany (no doubt given a "cool it girl!" nudge from her older sister; the "wow" expression vanished almost instantly!



Today Brittany Force is the quickest and fastest Top Fuel Racer on the planet! Her 3.623 at 331 mph last September at Mable Grove is the quickest, set next to Antron Brown's 3.67 @332; her 338.17 mph the fastest pass in Top Fuel history! This NHRA record run below had a 3.659 that took pole at Las Vegas in November and gave her a new track ET record too!



The razor's edge hits Doug Kalitta...



John Force's 4.021 at 319.52 ate TJ's troubled 4.20 at 241 in the first semi-final



mcSnips of Brittany racing courtesy nhra@youtube



...as Brittany became the fastest ever AA Fuel dragster pilot ever!



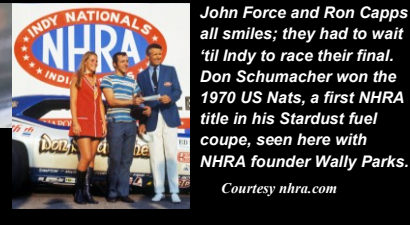
Alexis DeJoria powered ahead of Ron Capps, but problems gave Ron Capps an easy win, his 4.073 at 317.87; and Force lane choice in the finals - then it rained! However, the Top Fuel final was awesome, so I saved it 'til après some Fuel Coupe thunder from 2020's US Nats...



Beckman lost this close one to Hagan, but on Sunday, Fast Jack won his 2nd US Nats over KMS' JR Todd to give the Don his 351 NHRA title. Now back to Brainerd for their mind-blowing Top Fuel final...



Hagan's SRT Hellcat Redeye Charger (above), blasted to 3.919 at 328.54 to beat Beckman's 3.940, 325.53 in his Infinite Hero Charger for Don Schumacher's 350th title - the winningest team in our sport!



John Force and Ron Capps all smiles; they had to wait 'til Indy to race their final. Don Schumacher won the 1970 US Nats, a first NHRA title in his Stardust fuel coupe, seen here with NHRA founder Wally Parks. Courtesy nhra.com

Doug Kalitta's Mac Tools car set Friday's low ET, a 3.812 at 322.96mph ahead of nine cars in the .80's, book ended by Morgan Lucas. He quit racing last year to learn the family business, but returned in a special 25th anniversary Lucas Oil car and ran 3.88. Eight cars improved in Saturday's final Q session, yet only three ran .80's and moved up - Leah Pritchett's 3.87 took her Gumout car from outside to 11th along with DSR team mates Spencer Massey (seventh with a 3.83, 320.28), and Antron Brown, whose Matco Tools car took pole with a 3.810 at 318.77. Chris Karamesines thrilled his legions of fans by driving his ex-DSR streamliner (in Lucas Oil colours) to 15th with a 3.945, 305.98; enough for the famed octogenarian to win pole at the Pod's FIA Finals! Race day was a whole new ball game as cars thundered into the .70's - Doug Kalitta's 3.775 at 324.51 (took out the Greek) Morgan Lucas' holedshot win with a 3.78 at 317.94 over Bob Vandergriff's C&J Energy car's best pass of the race and new track ET record of 3.760 ! All four winners in round two ran .70's, including Doug Kalitta who re-set the track to 3.722 at 326mph (below), driving around Massey's quickest pass of the race, a 3.758, 327.51 by just 0.0134 seconds! In the semi finals Antron Brown's Matco Tools car left first, but Lucas re-took the lead early to win with a 3.729 at 323.66 over Brown's 3.770 at 319.82. Then Doug Kalitta got a holedshot, 3.752 at 324.67 eclipsing Tony Schumacher's 3.743 at 327.51 in his US Army Dragster by just 0.0053seconds! This led to one of the most amazing Top Fuel finals ever between Mac Tools and Lucas Oil, the point's leader vs the comeback kid! Doug Kalitta cut a 0.063 light to Morgan Lucas 0.077, had to pedal it almost instantly - and then the fun began...



Photo courtesy nhra.com



Photo courtesy nhra.com

MARGIN OF VICTORY: 0.053 sec.			
SCHUMACHER		KALITTA	
RT	3.743	RT	3.782
MPH	327.51	MPH	324.67

HOLEDHOT WIN

Thanks to the magic of NHRA's super-dooper hi-tech camera you can see just how short the track is today. I've watched this amazing Top Fuel final at BIR a gazillion times and seeing these two nitro pilots duking it out, sideways, on and off the pedal like there's no tomorrow is pure magic.

These pix from NHRA's YouTube video show how lucky we are to have technology that lets us enjoy a visual experience showing far more than our eyes could ever see trackside. Mind you I'd rather feel the noise and smell the NitroThunder first!



Top Fuel final
meSnips courtesy
NHRA YouTube

Told you it was an amazing final! Morgan Lucas took his third Top Fuel win at the Lucas Oil NHRA Nationals, sideways in a ball of fire (his Top Fuel debut was 10 years ago here!), with a 4.88 at 229.55 over Kalitta's 4.98, 256.16



After this race, Forrest Lucas (at far right), and the gang had every reason to celebrate

Wild ride right! Yet for his mum Charlotte at the top end waiting to present the winner's trophy, watching the cars coming at her and the absolute violence of that explosion! With instant replays it must've been a tad tough to see; all the while wondering if her son was okay! Wow – who said drag racing was easy! This eXtreme crop of Mark J. Rebilas' great shot for USA Today from MRL's Facebook page says it all – his Mum couldn't have got any closer to him if she tried!



Top Fuel final
mcSnips courtesy
NHRA YouTube

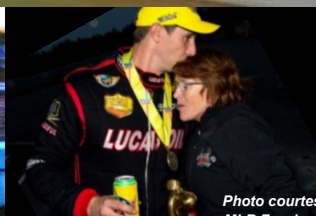


Photo courtesy
MLR Facebook
Mark J. Rebilas
USA TODAY

Wow, what a race! Click the link to feel the force of these images in less than 40 AA awesome seconds! Although won with a 4.88 at 229.55 over a 4.98 at 256.16, it was definitely a Top Fuel final to remember - especially for Morgan's Mum, Charlotte Lucas

September showdown 2014 FIA Finals

The announcement from the Pod that they'd be running 10 nitro cars in Friday night qualifying seemed optimistic, but added a touch of excitement to our conversation - unlike [redacted] waiting around for seven hours to get the next NitroFix after the morning session! Especially with the knowledge that only seven top fuel cars out of 20 ran quicker than 4.05 seconds in the first Q session at the US Nats the previous weekend - and that had been after only four weekends off during a 12 race-long summer-streak on the NHRA Mello Yello tour! Thanks to wicked weather and "marginal tracks," most of our top fuelers hadn't made a dozen full pulls all season, and my reasoning was justified when only one fuel car made it down track under power in Q1 at the Pod on the Friday morning!



At home, I'd tuned into Eurodragster and saw Stig Neergaard and Thomas Nataas do their thing - with Batman smoking the tyres a tad earlier than Stig!



mcSnips at left and Friday qualifying data courtesy eurodragster.com

At least fans that were there got to feel some NitroThunder, albeit briefly when the fuelers launched! But Duncan Micallef, the Maltese Lion, roared all the way, giving fans what they came for, thundering down track to 306.95mph with a stout 4.06 elapsed time to take first pole. Then came a long wait on a none-too warm day, although fans did have a bunch of racing to watch in the fresh air of [redacted] PC Redaction Santa Pod

Crowd strip courtesy Teo Merkunt YouTube



During the afternoon, fans had seen a 6.55 at 213.00 to put Jimmy Alund on Pro Stock pole, a 5.89 at 242.90 to put Micke Gullqvist on top in Pro Mod (ahead of Marc Meihuizen's 5.98 at a booming 242.88) and a 5.51 at 258 for the Jonnie Lindberg in Alcohol funny car, along with a whole host of other racers going for it, so I guess you had to say that they'd been entertained...

...on tuning in at seven fifteen, the by-now kind've chilly fans were still being entertained, this time by the Pod's own troupe of not-so long-legged dancers and their version of the broom dance!



While the team were cleaning up the track so the big boys could come out to play safely with their Awfully Awesome, ground-pounding, blown an' injected nitro burning fuelers, we were treated to some in-depth interviews with the Pod's own DC Bradford. He spoke with Per Andersen, who along with his partner Karsten heads the Batman team for star driver Thomas Nataas - not just the quickest and fastest, but THE class act in Top Fuel outside of the USA



Then came Stig Neergaard, the first European to have run a three who, with Anita Mäkelä's having stayed home to take care of business on the chicken farm, was running strong enough to have a shot at the title. As you can see, they both had uninspiring backdrops, but with Rookie Top Fuel pilot Noah Stutz, off to live the dream of joining the NHRA Mello Yello tour at Las Vegas; viewers got to see the wall of fans lining the banks watching on I-Phones, while Santa Pod's CEO had an empty VIP stand as back drop for his interview, but both were obviously enjoying their debut LIVE on SantaPodTV. Luckily for Mr Bartlett, his all-new, bells and whistles show on SantaPodTV was home-grown for computers

Had it been network TV the cost of the hour's delay on live television would've swallowed all the funds generated by the thousands of fans lining the banks! Oh well, maybe it was an hour late, but finally they were ready to fire the first pair...

LIVE

For the first time ever Nitrofire at the Pod

ATMOS FEAR LIVE on SantaPodTV



Unless noted all Friday night mcSnips courtesy SantaPodTV LIVE

Talk about wall-to-wall punters – the stands were jammed and the banking was heaving as defending event champ Chris Andrews backed-up alongside the 2012 FIA champion Urs Erbacher, who sadly didn't really make a burnout. Worse, Urs left before the lights ran and was instantly disqualified, which was kinda sad 'cos you can see that he'd hooked up and was really thundering, leaving behind a red glow alongside Chris Andrews' green light...



...Chris launched hard, driving the Lucas Oil car into the history books with his and Rune Fjeld Motorsports first sub-four-second run, a 3.97 and a great way to start the show. Sadly it was clicked off to 290mph because, Chris told me, "the car made a move," and in the dark that's all you need! Love the face-full of NitroFire and rear-view with Chris still blazing down track, a Snip from one of many replays seen in the [Friday night Q session](#) film that you can enjoy with the link.

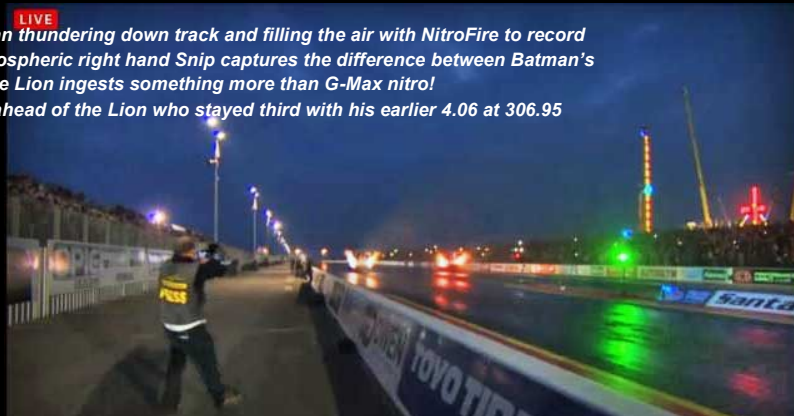
Following a short break while the track was cleared after Urs car had stopped, dead in the water, Micke Kågered and Stig Neergaard were fired up and rolled onto the track...



Both cars left really hard, but Micke K was off the power almost at once while Stig thundered – until a head gasket began to go, lifting early for a 4.10 at only 254 (having run 262mph at the eighth mile), and trailing some fire in the shut-off area

The final pair of the night were defending FIA champion and record holder Thomas Nataas in the Andersen racing car and Duncan Micallef at the helm of another of Rune Fjeld's machines. What a way to end the session, Batman vs the Maltese Lion!

LIVE They didn't let us down and these images made it for me – there's Batman thundering down track and filling the air with NitroFire to record the fastest short track speed outside the USA at 315.51mph! And the atmospheric right hand Snip captures the difference between Batman's full-power NitroFire and the angry orange as the Maltese Lion ingests something more than G-Max nitro!
Wow, what a race, Batman's strong 4.03 moved him to second place ahead of the Lion who stayed third with his earlier 4.06 at 306.95



"Would've, could've and should've" has long been the drag racers lament - but it was certainly true on this run



mcSnip strip courtesy NoISantapodshooter

You can see in the 2nd frame, Batman had to pedal it, the brief lose of power and momentum sufficient enough to help lose a three perhaps! And for the Maltese Lion to play catch up - until his engine began eating itself, slowing the car to a 4.11, 279.45 – and here's a [different angle](#) on Batman's pedal job...



Santa Pod's CEO is always telling us that drag racing doesn't make any money, but judging from the strip above (shot earlier by Tao Merkunt) and my Snip at left taken shortly after Batman's thunder run, he should've been grinning from ear to ear as that banking is packed with folks, most of whom paid full retail to stand and wait such a long time for what in truth was an oh-so-brief taste of NitroNirvana



Sadly, the track was gone by now and when the fuel coupes came out a few minutes later, their power blasts were even briefer –but that's drag racing! Even so, ol' Nitro Nostrils told me they felt and tasted good!

But the lucky trucker was shooting on the line as Kevin Kent's West Ten Mustang pounded the ground on a solo pass, had problems and clicked off early to coast through with an 8.68 at 79.39mph. Then fans got some smoky side-by-side AAFC action, with Jason Phelps' Mustang getting a huge holeshot over Gordon Smith's Dodge before both of 'em clicked off. But Jason stayed ahead to take pole in the first qualifying session for the European Funny Car Series' Finals with a blistering 7.76 at a huge 84.42 mph over the Mopar's close 7.98 at 81.83mph! Okay, so I'm taking the piss, but even at home on the computer, they were definitely pounding the ground, looking and sounding strong and fans got to see and feel some pretty wild NitroFire, albeit very briefly



Grandstand Snip courtesy OliversAviationvideo

Wendy Baker's Time Warp Mustang II nostalgia fuel coupe gave us more, thrilling fans with old school smoky burnout, dry hops and nitro barking to the line before she left hard, lookin' good and haulin' the mail, lifting as the car made a serious move, and cacklin' down the track to end the nitro show



And talking of serious moves; most of the paying punters on the banking do not get to see the flame and thunder display put on by Martin Hill's Fireforce jet funny car as it's hidden from view! Oh well, maybe next year

As fans waited for Fireforce to come out of hiding, it looks too chilly for ice cream, but no doubt Mr Whippy sold more than a few during the long day



Unless noted all Friday night Snips courtesy SantaPodTV



Just after eight thirty Fireforce moved into view, staged up and then stormed into the night trailing jet-fire as it sped to a 5.90 at 271.37mph



Fireforce Snips courtesy OliversAviationvideo

Well, the Pod had promised 10 nitro cars and, with the addition of Time Warp, they'd delivered [redacted] Once again we'd seen just how tough it is to run the numbers in the mighty world of Top Fuel dragsters and Fuel Coupes. But Chris Andrew's 3.97 and Thomas Nataas' mind blowing 315.51mph on a 4.03 were enough to keep most happy. As ever, the teams did their best during an entertaining thirty minutes, giving fans some real NitroFire and ground-pounding thunder



Unlike the Pod's highlights show which mentions it in passing as "spectacular," or their Motors TV show with 91 seconds of back-to-back, multi-camera, not-stop Friday night NitroFire replays making it seem as if there were far more than three pairs of fuel cars (that sure looked good!), this link will take you to the Pod's 41-minute long Friday night show, sans interviews, but with all the runs all the runs, LIVE as they happened – with replays!

With thoughts of some 3-second, 300mph Top Fuel runs spurring me on, I'd left early and driven hard - then a wrong turn down a country lane found me lost (for the first time ever!), en route to the Pod!
(The [redacted] was probably jamming your sat nav mate -- ML)

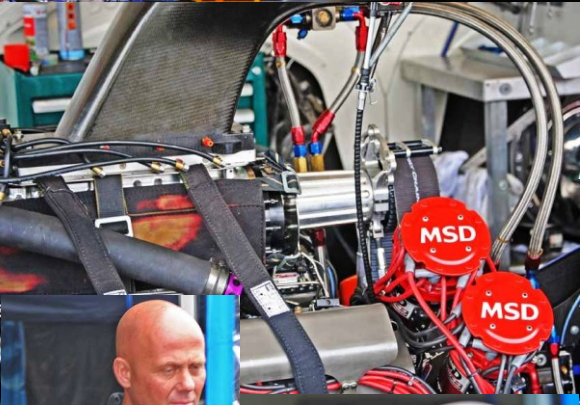
the fast go faster

aka
Batman kicks butt!

After driving around in a huge circle for more than half-an-hour before getting back en route, I reached the gates only to be behind the slowest Corvette I'd ever seen. Seems it wasn't his fault though; apparently when all the credit card machines are being used things go kinda slow, so it took longer getting through the gates than it did to walk from the start line to nitro ally. And that included stopping to stand on my toes, catching a glimpse of a couple of Super Pro racers doing their thing, and a TV man shooting the action.



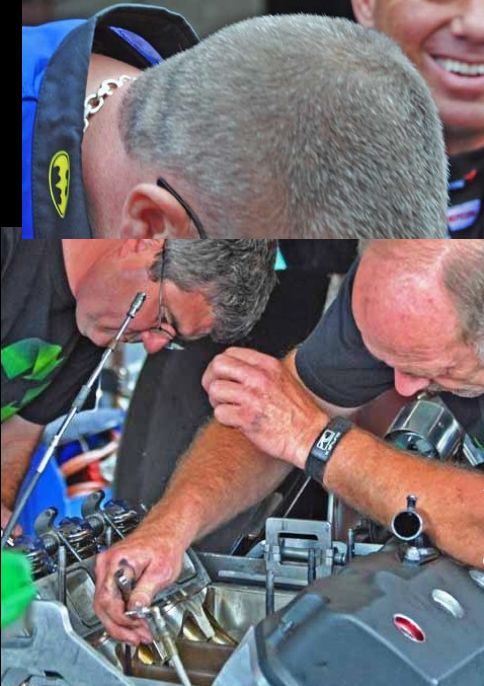
Once up amongst the fuel cars I found Urs Erbacher's crew just moving out, so I wasn't really late... après



The Andersen Racing power plant, ready to rumble and roar in search of more speed, quicker ETs and a second straight FIA title! F&A's Lucas Oil car was ready to roll, Chris Andrews all smiles, hand in his pockets, probably holding onto his 3.97 ticket and hoping for more!



Thomas Nataas was chillin' out and looked pensive, but when I congratulated him on his 315mph pass, asking if we'd see more today, Batman's eyes lit up and his smile said it all. Sadly, one of the Andersen's ducked down and stole the Nikon's focus!



This crew were still hard at it with a bunch of work to do... Good enough reason to go see what was happening on track, happy to find a pair of alcohol funny cars ready to race...



Maybe there's no nitro, but they can still thunder - sometimes. Steph Milam ran her first five at the Main Event, a 5.98 at 235



Losing a couple of cylinders at the hit meant no five today, but when all eight came back she hiked the front end and was gone. Sadly her 6.041, 229.33 (alongside Danny Bellio's troubled 11.48), hurt her motor and she failed to answer the call on race day...





The alky floppers were on good side-by-side charge, until they got some shake, with Leif Andréasson bouncing hard – and high, all four wheels off the track captured in this great shot from ADImages



This extreme crop of Leif's tracks sees a crew member checking just how far her driver "flew" the funny car between touchdowns!



Courtesy UKDRN
ADImages

Johan Lindberg drove to a 5.52 at 257.54, kissin' close to his earlier 5.51 at 258.16 pole numbers, with Leif slowing to a 5.87 at 199 behind his previous second place 5.63, 253.82. The first Pro Mod car dumped oil; the next pair was shut-off so I took a stroll. Some folks were smilin' and some not. But waiting over an hour alongside any race car is never fun when stood alone. Especially if you've yet to get down track under power like Top Fuel pilots Urs and Micke K! But they look relaxed – as did the Viking, sort of! He was waiting to tow Mattias Vulcan's drop dead gorgeous Firebird Pro Mod



Stig always seems to smile, much like Batman and his gang, while Chris Andrews had his 3.97 pole position and was happy to wait and keep it! Gabby McDonald, a would-be Top Fuel pilot, was all smiles, ready for another licensing pass in one of Rune's cars

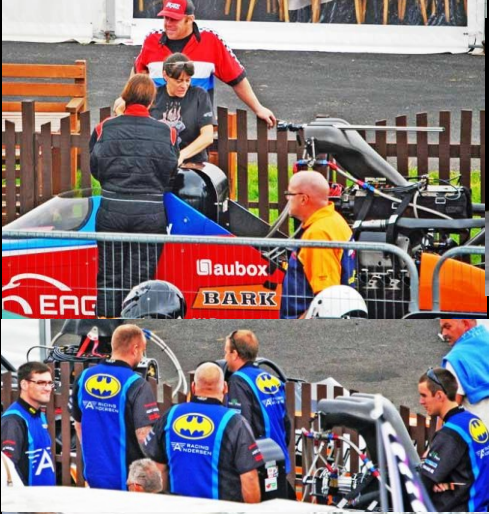


Stig always seems to smile, much like Batman and his gang, while Chris Andrews had his 3.97 pole position and was happy to wait and keep it! Gabby McDonald, a would-be Top Fuel pilot, was all smiles, ready for another licensing pass in one of Rune's cars



Seems I missed the Pro Mod Q session, but did get to see the final pair. Micke Gullqvist was well late leaving while Marc Meihuizen sped to a 6.093 at 234.70, well short of his 5.893, 242.90 pole position run from Friday. Micke Gullqvist followed, his 6.047, 222.53 run also shy of his second place 5.983 at 242.88

A glance over my shoulder showed the top fuel teams still waiting -- just like us fans...



The Pro Stock cars came out, but only two out of the 5-car field made it down track! Simon Gustafsson (left) launched hard but quit early. Thomas Lindström ran low ET of the day, 6.63 at 207.22 on a bye and moved up a position while Michael Malmgren shut off. Magnus Pettersson's failed to improve with a 6.66 at 207 alongside pole sitter Jimmy Alund (6.55 at 213), who shook and clicked it off well early. Happily, when I looked over my shoulder again, the Top Fuel cars were moving towards the start line, turning to find Andy Willsheer mingling with punters in the stands!



Nikon time
13:37:14



Thought it was weird, until ol' Nitro Nostrils explained he'd been visiting with nitro neophyte Gabby McDonald's mum, before walking on by and heading for the start line

Looking at my watch, I saw it was 37 minutes past one, the nitro cars were running well late - and so was Andy!



Andy had still not made it back to the line when, one minute later, Urs Erbacher made a burnout ahead of a much stronger one from Duncan Micallef in his Rune Fjeld Motorsports car

But he was there to get a faceful of nitro when both cars launched hard.



Sadly Urs was soon in trouble and it turned into a one car thunder run

The Maltese Lion continued to roar, marching on down the track in fine style



This could be when the Maltese Lion's car began to lose a three-second ET, the tyre starting to bulge as it went into shake mode – but Duncan drove it hard to a 4.02 at 303mph, yet another consistent pass for his Rune Fjeld Motorsports car. Meanwhile severe shake, pedallin' and smokin' the tyres eventually activated Urs' safety cut-out and deployed his chutes, the car cruising through the traps to a 6.12 at 131.38 with chutes flapping in the breeze



Some in y'face portrait work by ol' Nostrils for long-time commentator John Price and a couple of VIP's as Santa Pod's CEO KB feels the power of my prying paparazzi eyes and turns from his chat with the Andersen's and F&A racing's head honcho Vince Andrews.

Walking over to JP, he puts the VIPs into a safe area to enjoy the magic of being between a pair of blown an' injected, nitro burning monsters and Rune Fjeld covers his ears when the next fueler fires up...

...meanwhile, Vince Andrews gets snagged by the TV crew and sucks it in for the camera as the Pod's CEO tells John Price he's in my sniper scope before walking away...



...then Micke Kägered thunders by with John and his VIP guests all wishing they'd been a bit quicker in putting their ear defenders on properly!

Eventually, Keith takes his place centre stage, and the VIPs go all girly, shutting their eyes tight to keep the sound and fury of NitroThunder out as Stig stands loud on his Eye of the Storm fueler, unleashing it on a ground-pounding burnout



The car gets up on the tyres and thunders, much to the delight of the shutterbugs soaking it all up, each hoping for a kinda different shot to everyone else...



Both cars sounded strong as they left together

They both lost a couple of cylinders at about the same time too...



...but Stig lost a bunch, smoked 'em – then grabbed some traction, pulling away from Micke K as he poured on the power...



...whoops, too much power!



Yep, w-a-y too much!



Suddenly the Eye of a Storm made a violent move and Stig lifted for a 6.71, 90.88mph cruise while Micke Kågered overcame his problems, making it down track under some semblance of power with his best numbers of the weekend, a 4.25 at 264.69. Sadly the huge crowd had yet to feel the thunder from side-by-side full pulls – but that's drag racing, especially with the blown an' injected nitro powered beasts!



Then the ground shook as the quickest and fastest cars at the track roared into life and began their burnout routines



As the Andersen Racing fueller was backing up, I recalled that it'd been a new car at the Main Event, with Batman's 3.91 at 309.23 the first full pull it made! After a pair of "marginal tracks" the team unleashed Batman again at the Turtle Wax Internationals at Tierp



Fans at Tierp had seen a 3.957 at 311.84 and a quicker 3.955 at 310.97 to set new FIA records – now the team were looking for more!



Most of the Top Fuel Q images are eXtreme crops, but the images of this race are Xtra Xtreme crops as you can see from the full frame below taken before the shots at right and above



Full frame

The great shot of the two fuel cars staging at right is a Snip from SantaPodTV. Check out the world's quickest and fastest American Autoparts decal



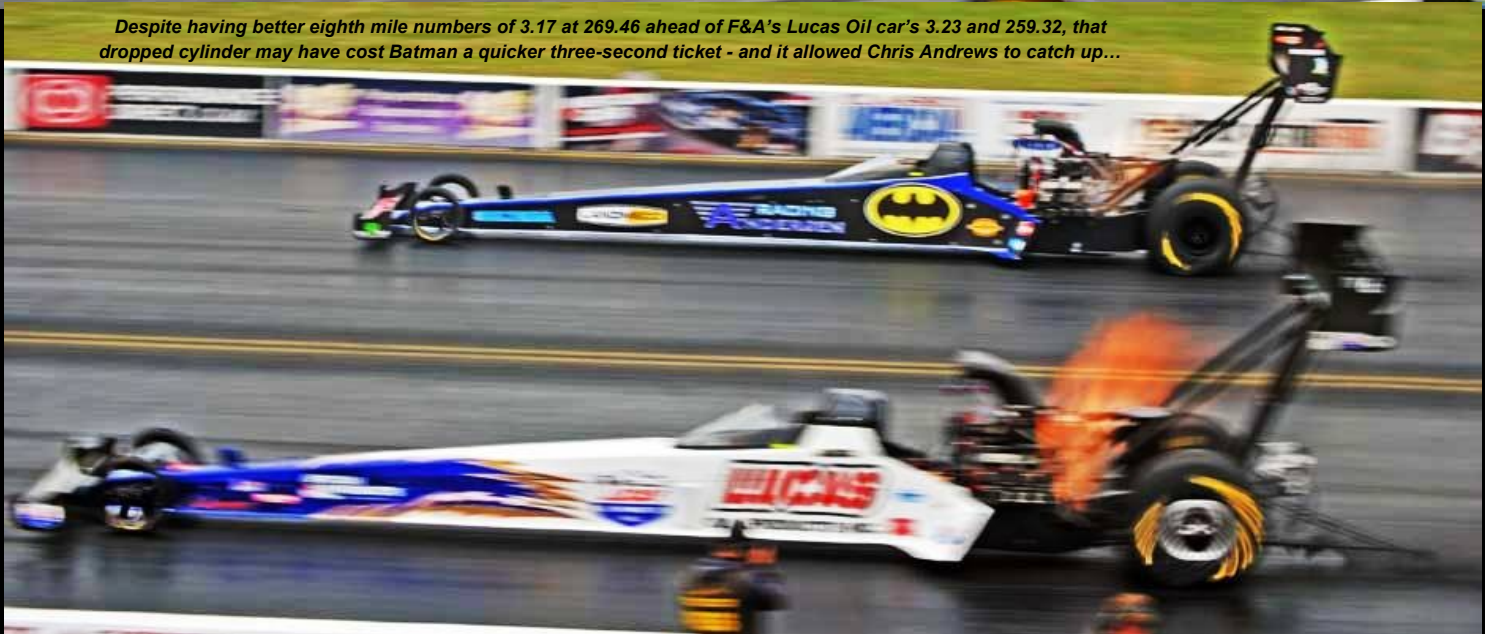
Both cars launched hard and strong, the sound and fury of Nitro Thunder filling the air, Batman's front end floating as he blasts off in pursuit of a new record

Nikon time 13:47:58

Batman's car seems to have dropped a cylinder, yet his 0.8531 60 foot time is quicker than the 0.8907 from the Lucas Oil car which is belching NitroFire, giving ol' Nitro Nostrils a face full of eight trunks trumpeting before thundering by, the pair thrilling the wall of fans lining the banking



Despite having better eighth mile numbers of 3.17 at 269.46 ahead of F&A's Lucas Oil car's 3.23 and 259.32, that dropped cylinder may have cost Batman a quicker three-second ticket - and it allowed Chris Andrews to catch up...



...and then the Lucas Oil car began pulling away!

By the time the Andersen Racing car was hitting on all eight again, the Lucas oil shield was definitely ahead of Batman's!





Although my Nikon allows me to film non-stop on full auto, when the dude next door put his camera in my face (pointing the wrong way!), I raised my Nikon, forgetting all about Wojtek's big lens, the weight of which, sadly, threw my aim off and the next half-a-dozen shots were of the backs of spectator's heads! But they were all in focus as the (full frame) shot at right shows!
Nikon time 13:48:04



Talk about a close race!

The Andersen Racing fueler thundered through the top end, with Thomas Nataas' 3.949 (reflecting the dropped cylinder), taking pole position at a huge 316.40 mph, showing that their car is the most powerful outside the USA. The Lucas car followed them home with a 4.045 at an improved speed of 297.03mph. Fans went nuts as the numbers came up on the score boards and when, a few moments later, Karsten (left) and Per Andersen, trying hard to control their justified jubilation as they drove the "tow truck" down to pick up the car, were given a huge ovation from fans packing both sides of the track



Nikon time 13:48:48

Santa Pod TV

NEVER BELIEVE WHAT YOU HEAR ON THE BOX!



If you'd watched this on SantaPodTV you'd've been shown this shot of Stig Neergard's car being covered as a soft voice said, "But sadly that was the last run before it started to rain..." Which was not quite true! As you've just read, Stig actually smoked his Eye of the Storm down track before Batman set his new FIA speed record at 13.48 approximately - click the link, check it out! Apart from anything else, a few moments later we heard a Top Fuel car being fired up! It was a soft burnout, but as the folks in the VIP tower could attest, it launched hard, carrying the front wheel and thundering with Gabby McDonald chasing a Top Fuel licence...



Nikon time 13:52:10



It was a strong looking pass to begin, but Gabby had some problems, the car made a move and she kicked it off for a 5.47



*Then they called for the fuel coupes; so much for rain stopping play, or racing!
Nikon time 13:54:02*



Sadly, only one fuel coupe came out, giving fans and the happy snappers on the a line a great ground-ponding burnout



When Kevin Kent launched his West Ten Mustang, you knew he was off on the ride of his life. Nitro guru Bodie Smith had worked his magic and the car just got up and plain thundered, relatively speaking that is. Not to take anything away from the team who gave us the best they could with what they've got and we loved it!



We had wide open NitroFire all the way to the stripe, or rather orange marker poles! Either way, fans applauded when Kevin's numbers came up, his 4.4293 at 280.45mph the quickest and fastest in the first season of short track, fuel coupe racing.



We got a pair of fuel coupes next, with Jason Phelps once again making his burnout late, pounding the ground as Gordon Smith backed across the start line.

And then Jason's Team Rock Mustang left first yet again!



Fans thronging the banks went wild at the sights, sounds and smells of NitroThunder as the fuel coupes blasted by side-by-side with Jason just ahead. Shockwave gained an edge at the eighth - a 3.60 at 227.85 to Jason's Team Rock car, now losing ground with a 3.98 at 220.82

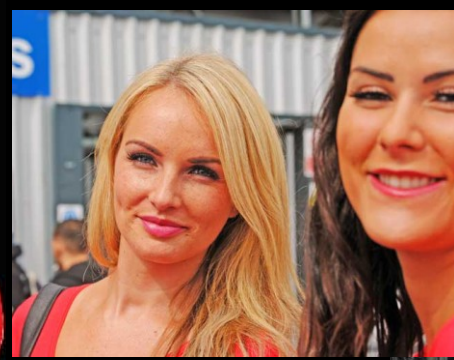


It ended early for both cars, Jason Phelps struggling to a 4.98 at 221.22 as Gordon Smith clicked it off to a 4.591 win at only 223.63, showing Shockwave III had power

With no nitro for awhile, it was time to seek some respite and the long-legged Auto Glym babes were a fun place to start. They also had wonderful smiles and we laughed a lot before parting. The young lady below is definitely not laughing, looking ready to lose her lunch!



Nikon time 13:43:29



My lunch at the Pit Stop café was really good, a baked potato and chilli con carne being just what I needed after a long, long morning!

Sharing a table with a family having a snack enhanced my break, thanks to Caitlin, an avid drag race fan who admired my Mongoose cap, told me she loved the nitro cars and how much she'd enjoyed the drive-in movie at Dragstalgia. My suggestion that she slept through it was not well received, but she did fall down as she left! No, she watched it all with eyes wide open, and told me she preferred Mongoose to the Snake!

That's cool, as the moving finale almost made it a chick-flick! Only kidding folks, it's a great story about a pair of true legends who changed our sport forever



"Surely the toilets themselves aren't
"The UK's most action packed venue,"
but we'll forgive the odd juxtaposition!"



It was good to see a couple of Stig's crew able to take a break after their tough slog rebuilding the motor before the next FIA Q session. Also taking a break was old pal Björn Sundkvist, long-time commentator at Mantorp Park, and more recently, at the Pod during FIA sessions at their international meetings.



While signing my Harlan Thompson magazine in which he's featured, Björn told me the origins of "Pig Farm International," but I'll save that tale while hoping to get photographic proof. The story is a real doozy, but with an original image it'd be a forever top ten winner! We also recalled my visit to the track for one of Mantorp's famed Sko Uno Drag Fest's with Harlan's Budweiser fuel coupe team back in the day. They and Rune Fjeld's Motown team were relaxing in preparation for the final when a track official asked if they'd mind racing "right now" as, with bad weather moving in, they might not be able to run in at the scheduled time. No problem was the instant reply, and shortly later fans were witness to one of the all-time great fuel coupe races with Harlan's holeshot (above) giving him a win with a 6.05 at 236.96mph while Rune thundered to low ET and top speed of the meeting with a blistering 6.03 at 241mph...

Harlan Thompson



Part III

The Budweiser years

All the young dudes! Mantorp Park's Björn Sundkvist talks with Harlan and Rune Fjeld after a 6.05, 236.96 mph holeshot win over the Norwegian ace's 6.03 at 241 mph at Sweden's 1987 Sko Uno drag festival.

Meanwhile back at the Pod; "Fine chance of that happening here," I'd said to Björn as we parted, little knowing how true that would be!



Back in the grandstand, Top Fuel cars were lined up ready to race, with the engine covered on Duncan Micallef's car to keep it warm, and in view of weather moving in from over there...



And the Pro Mods were running, having as many problems with full pulls as the fuelers! I missed Andy Robinson's 5.96 (first UK Pro Mod in the fives) at 239 alongside Freddy Fagerström, whose fabulous pick-up had problems with an 11.89 at 71.63! Same with the first pair I caught - Mattias Wulcan ran a strong 6.0 at 238.91 alongside a troubled 8.76 at 106. I was hoping for better things as the beautiful Gotham City Sting Ray made a good strong burnout...





...it left hard, but while Bruno Bader stormed to a 6.01 at 230.49, Tero Laukkanen hit bad tyre shake and slowed to an 8.22



The Sting Ray's paint-job is really wild, and so's that spacey looking camera!

And then we got a real Pro Mod brawl, side-by-side for the while quarter mile, sort of...



Marc Meihuizen Firebird got the advantage with a 0.0452 to 0.1012 light, but then Micke Gullqvist's Camaro began to thunder, hitting the eighth mile in 3.92 seconds at 190.24 to a 4.03 at 188.86 due to some sideways action from the Firebird

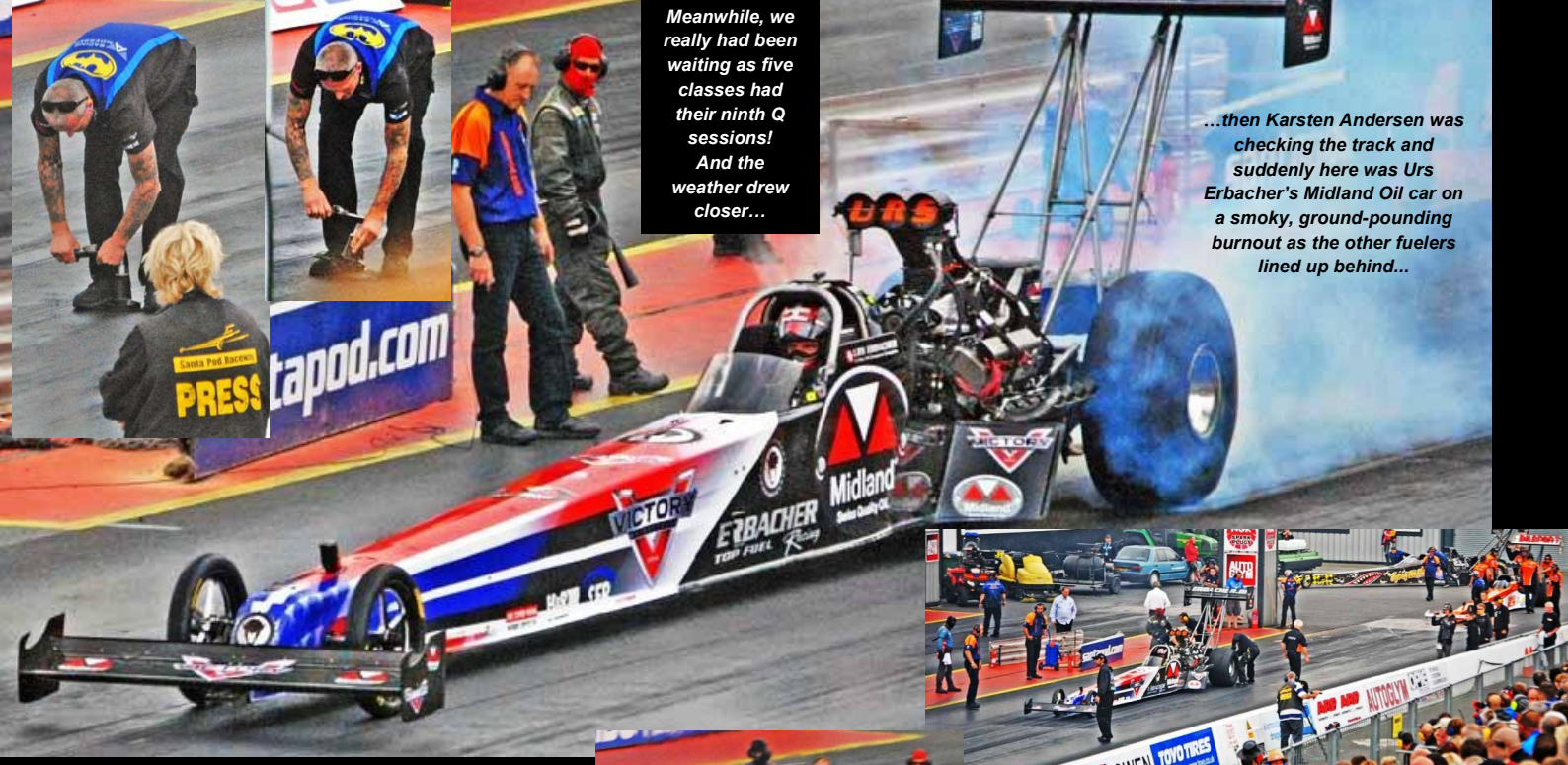


Wow! A race worth waiting for; with Micke G's 5.95 at a huge 242.45 just pipping Marc M's Firebird's 6.08 at 241.59. Marc Meihuizen really had to drive his car keeping it side-by-side all the way, much to fans delight

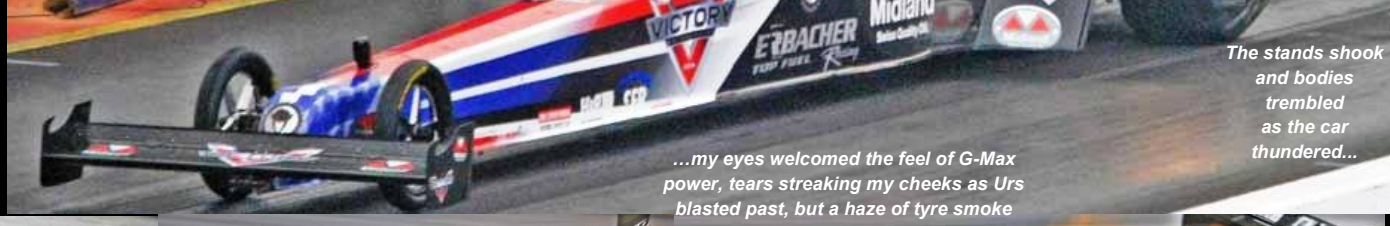


Meanwhile, we really had been waiting as five classes had their ninth Q sessions! And the weather drew closer...

...then Karsten Andersen was checking the track and suddenly here was Urs Erbacher's Midland Oil car on a smoky, ground-pounding burnout as the other fuelers lined up behind...



Urs staged tight, NitroThunder filling our ears as he unleashed the beast and its awesome NitroFire



The stands shook and bodies trembled as the car thundered...

...my eyes welcomed the feel of G-Max power, tears streaking my cheeks as Urs blasted past, but a haze of tyre smoke signalled the end, even though it was his quickest run of the weekend!



Sadly it was too little, too late; the racing put on hold for "sprinkles" - and that's when then put the covers over Stig's car Mr TV Talker! But they still hadn't called it off...

...however, my mind's eye suddenly filled with images of another race my genial Swiss pal had; instantly thinking, "Simon likes Xclusive Eurodragster bonus pages for his readers, so let's given 'em some classic NitroPower from the Pod's last quarter mile FIA championship!" Retro ramblin's Chalk & Cheese from late 2011 featured hot Bunny Girls and the quickest and fastest fuel cars in town! Wow, what a weekend; my AA Fuel Zippo was running a fresh mix of 100% G-Max and the FIA title race was wide open...



Retro Ramblin's
Chalk & Cheese special
words and photos Mike Collins
goarmy.com

Courtesy: nhra.com

RFM's Jari Halinen was on a pass, until this wisp of smoke lost his four second, 300mph ticket; he ran 5.03 at 296.49mph!

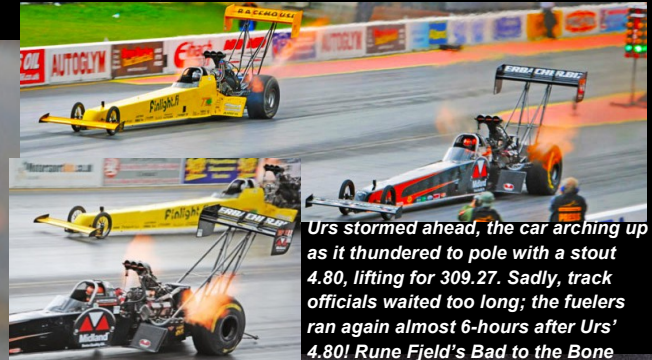


After her ground-pounding burnout Finland's Anita Mäkelä sped to the number two spot with 4.95, clicked early to 228.15. Micke Kägered had problems, his 5.26 on the bubble. Urs Erbacher and Finland's Timo Lehtimäki raced side-by-side for some time before Timo clicked early it, taking fifth spot with a 5.08 at 263.58mph



It maybe could've been quicker, but as the insert shot shows, Urs' left slick spun a tad!

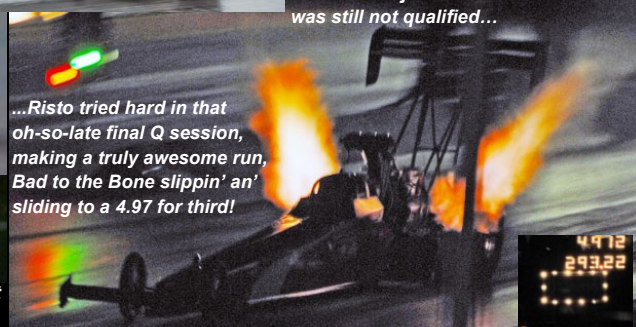
My all-time favourite Fuel Coupe NitroFire as the "Ace" thunders to the 1990 Gators' win over KC Spurlock



Urs stormed ahead, the car arching up as it thundered to pole with a stout 4.80, lifting for 309.27. Sadly, track officials waited too long; the fuelers ran again almost 6-hours after Urs' 4.80! Rune Fjeld's Bad to the Bone was still not qualified...



Think you'll agree this page is packed with NitroFire, while my pals Bunny Natalie at right and Bunny Yasmin at left wear Bunny Ears that look nothing like our awesome header flames! DC Bradford (seen posing on the wall below), thinks they do! Sadly, Anita Mäkelä's NitroFire was lost at the hit, along with her 2011 FIA title dreams as she smoked 'en big time in E1!



...Risto tried hard in that oh-so-late final Q session, making a truly awesome run, Bad to the Bone slippin' an' sliding to a 4.97 for third!

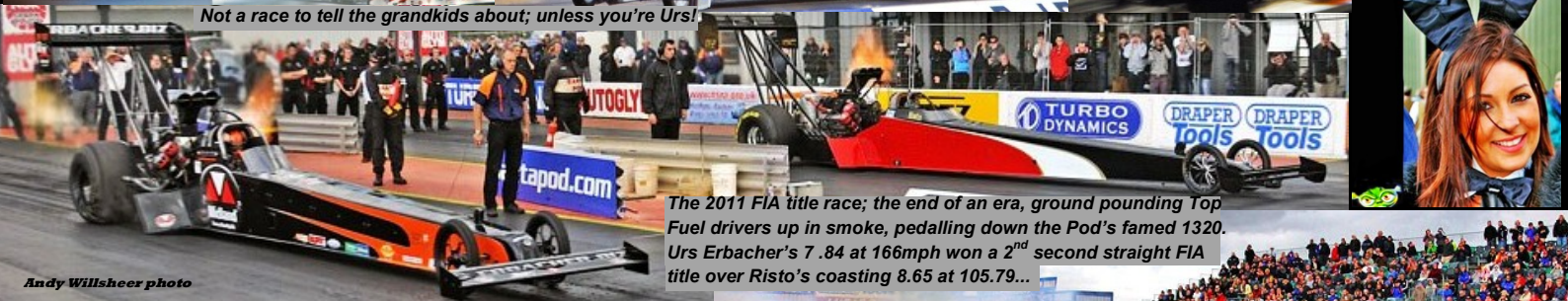
Timo Lehtimäki on his mind-blowing final quarter mile Q pass in 2011; check out its monster power plant!



Anita Mäkelä Race day blues photos by Wojtek



Not a race to tell the grandkids about; unless you're Urs!



The 2011 FIA title race; the end of an era, ground pounding Top Fuel drivers up in smoke, pedalling down the Pod's famed 1320. Urs Erbacher's 7.84 at 166mph won a 2nd second straight FIA title over Risto's coasting 8.65 at 105.79...

Andy Willsheer photo



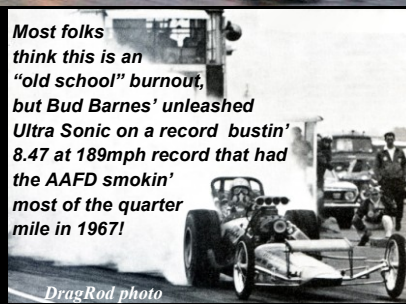
Z Max photos courtesy nhra.com



Also featured was Matt Hagan's first official NHRA sub 4-second 1000foot pass in Don Schumacher's Die Hard Dodge Charger. I'd stood tall off my chair, yelling into the night on seeing his awesome run at the start of ESPN's Q show; the score boards lit up at Z Max, the crowd went nuts. It turned out he'd been running on 7-cylinders at the top end! Matt took out DSR team mate Fast Jack; then backed up his new ET record with a 4.018 and a mind blowing 322.27mph! In 2016 Urs introduced me to India, his delightful daughter, out with her A/FD; now she's our Fastest Top Fuel racer who eclipsed Batman's 2014 mark with a thundering 318.96 at Tiern in 2019! She's next with our Quickest Top Fuel driver, RFM's Maja Udtian (3.806 at the Pod's 2019 Finals), in side-by-side 2019 wheels-up action before we return to 2014 to enjoy some NitroFun après the rains...

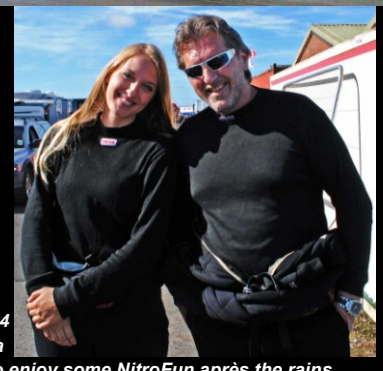


Rose Hughes photo courtesy dragracingonline.com



Most folks think this is an "old school" burnout, but Bud Barnes' unleashed Ultra Sonic on a record bustin' 8.47 at 189mph record that had the AAFD smokin' most of the quarter mile in 1967!

DragRod photo





Nikon time 19:44:18
17:07:40



The day began with me getting lost and ended, almost, with me walking away from nitro for the first time; but I went straight back a milli second later and continued to savour every eye watering second of NitroOverload until the team hit the kill switch. Oh boy! Even ol' Nitro Nostrils had walked away early as, without an extractor fan under the awning, we were deep in a cloud of the most powerful speed accessory in the world, G-Max Nitro! Thing is, it'd really hit me, and I decided to have a cigarette. If it made me cough, I'd got a problem, if not things were okay; and they were, which was cool! You can see how heavy the nitro was – far out!

Wow! Sunshine in 2019; Jndia and Maja, two hot babes launching hard in 21st century fuel cars - my kinda NitroNirvana, as was my last big buzz on the Saturday at 2014's FIA finals - a nitro warm-up by the Lucas Oil car, and it was AA amazing!



These three images cover about 20 seconds and they were absolutely awesome!



NEVER BELIEVE WHAT YOU HEAR ON THE BOX

PC Redaction

PART TWO

Despite what they said on Santa Pod's one hour highlights show on MotorsTV about how it "...started to rain," – it didn't, not 'til later! As you've seen, we had a bunch of racing action afterwards, including Q sessions from all the other FIA classes after the Top Fuel Q session, the second round of Fuel Coupe qualifying. There were also NINE Q sessions for cars including Junior Dragsters, which seems a tad too much given the fact that we were later told folks had been watching the weather radar for some time!

And then of course there were the bikes; but in truth, it didn't "rain" until much later, although racing was stopped due to "sprinkles" shortly after 5pm following Urs Erbacher's up-in-smoke cruise through with a 5.24 at 142.51mph. It was his best run of the weekend, made more than three hours after Batman's awesome thunder run! And racing wasn't called off for another three hours!

Just after the "rain stopped play" announcement on the TV show we heard "When it rains on the track, how do you adjust your driving?" The question asked of Thomas Nataas by Santa Pod's new TV announcer after she'd just seen him run a 3.94, setting a new European speed record of 316.40mph! Maybe someone forgot to tell her that blown an' injected nitro burning monsters only do it in the dry!

Before the finals on TV we were told, "Urs started out the season with a two car team with Noah Stutz, Noah's now gone to race in the States, but Urs stuck it out with us guys here in Europe..." Yet I'm standing here smoking one of his Marlboro after F&A's awesome end of day nitro warm-up! And as you saw on the lead page of this September showdown story, Noah was interviewed "LIVE" before the night session began!

Meanwhile, thanks to the TV team for trying, and providing the most entertaining Pod show ever! And a special thanks to all the NitroWarriors, we know you want it more than we do, and we are aware of just how hard it is to make it all work, even in the oh-so-short world of thousand foot NitroThunder



Worst ever signage placement award stays with SPR for the above!

Top Fuel action at the Pod's Not the FIA Finals' gig next weekend will be coming from Santa Pod's Slick Tricks Racing car driven by Susanne Callin. She'll be hoping to beat her 4.019/299.00 marks with added incentive from Finland's Antti Horto driving one Rune Fjeld Motorsports fuelers. Wish 'em both well, and hope they get to enjoy some good ol' NitroThunder!

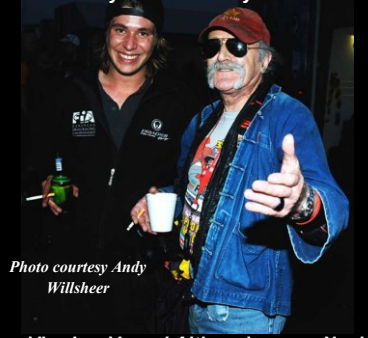


Photo courtesy Andy Willsheer

Viva Las Vegas! Although young Noah DNQ'd in the quickest ever NHRA Top Fuel field, he ran a trio of three's with a best of 3.876 at 315.19, placing him 19 out of 22 with a 3.835 bump spot! The quickest & fastest teenager on the planet perhaps – at least on the short track! Way to go Noah

Sunday slowdown

photos by Wojtek
fine tuned by me



Once again the American Autoparts crew were guests of F&A Racing / Lucas Oil Products; Wojtek's perch was the mid-track suite which, I feel, affords better photographic opportunities than the start line balcony



At mid-track, you not ear the power as the fuel cars leave the line, you can almost feel it; then they blast past in search of 300mph and it's kind've mind-blowing when they're side-by-side! Trouble is, even with the short track, that type of Top Fuel racing is hard to come by at the Pod, even though the teams are all out there hoping for a full pull on each pass. But that's drag racing and it didn't happen here; Stig left first but was slowed by tyre shake, leaving Micke Kägered to take an easy win with a 4.11 at 280.40



Duncan Micallef slowed a tad from his 300mph pace, but ran 4.02 at 295.86 for an easy win over Tethys

Chris Andrews put the Lucas Oil ahead at the hit, but severe tyre shake and a pedal job blew its blower relief panel, safety cut-out popped his chutes slowing his car to a 9.31 at 42.61mph; Urs Erbacher ran a second quicker than his previous run with 4.19 at 283.94

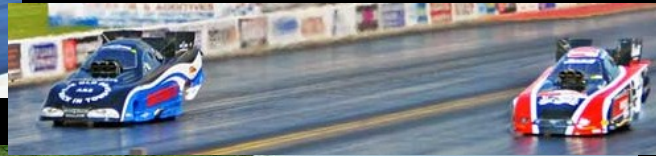


Any chance of Thomas Nataas backing up his 3.94 for a record went up in smoke early, but his bye run gave him and the Andersen's a second straight FIA championship with a 4.99 at 143.03 – way to go Batman!





NitroFire from the bikes is different, but still great to see and feel



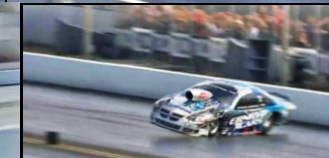
Just like their two earlier races, Jason Phelps was out of the gate first, but he encountered tyre shake and slowed as Gordon Smith moved on with a 4.44 at 273. Kevin Kent had a bye, hit problems and coasted through



Pro Mod saw a great side-by-side battle, with Mattias Wulcan's 5.96 at 240.30 taking out Bruno Bader 6.02 at 233.65 in the Gotham City Sting Ray. Wojtek also caught the start of the first race of eliminations, an amazing duel between David Vegter and Micke Gullqvist.



SantaPodTV's main man put this sequence behind Santa Pod CEO Keith Bartlett's end of show chat and, as you can see from the Snips below, it was a really entertaining for viewers. David Vegter's MPM car took the win with a 7.20 at 204.42 over Micke G's 7.34 at 196.27.



SantaPodTV also showed the wild rides above from the first round – click the link and check it out, you'll enjoy the ride, honest! Fans also saw another great side-by-side match when Marc Meihuizen's 6.05 at 241.17mph took out Roger Johansson's 6.06, 237.69. That win gave Mattias Wulcan the FIA Pro Mod title



The AAP crew were going to lunch when Wojtek heard the sound of eight trunks trumpeting as the fuelers fired up, ran into the stands and grabbed these great action shots. They've all been given Xtreme crops and the full-frame mini-pix at right show just how Xtreme they are!



It had taken Wojtek some time to locate ol' Nitro Nostrils with whom I'd left Wojtek's big lens, but that's cool, as he got it hooked up just in time for some in y'face action and some good ol' NitroThunder!



Wow - talk about asleep at the wheel!

Duncan Micallef strapped this gi-normous 0.0674 to 0.2518 holeshot on Urs and was off and thundering with a car length lead!



Urs was still carrying the front wheels a car-length later, and you can almost hear him screaming to his car, "Go, go, go," - in Swiss of course!

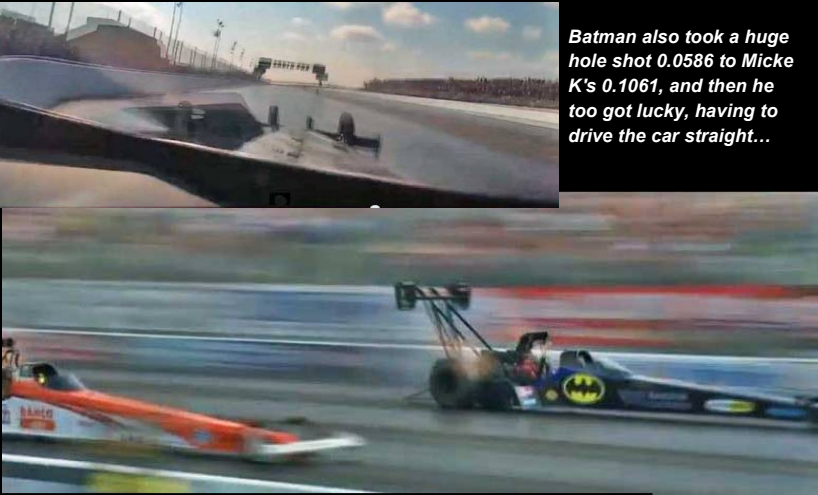
Unfortunately, Wojtek's Nikon only takes four shots before "going to sleep" for a few seconds, and by the time it woke up the cars were through the lights! However, thanks to SantaPodTV, here are Snips of the Maltese Lion's fireball, and the result. Just love today's technology!



To say Urs got lucky is an understatement, but he won the race – and a shot at another FIA Finals title. More than that, his pleas worked, the run giving his best numbers of the weekend, 4.21 at 281.99



Then Wojtek was "taken" to Lunch! Mind you, I missed the fuelers "LIVE" too, but tuned in later to catch the replay on SantaPodTV and made some more Snips...



Batman also took a huge hole shot 0.0586 to Micke K's 0.1061, and then he too got lucky, having to drive the car straight...

...while Batman was smokin' an' sliding, Micke K was thundering and coming on like a freight train! But Batman's holeshot was enough to take the win with a 4.33 at 219.12 over Micke Kägered's tad quicker 4.30 but much faster 250mph by just 0.0169seconds!



Had this been on the a good ol' quarter mile – well our in-car view shows Micke K's orange car blasting by at the old 1320 mark!





Oops, I got those runs the wrong way round! Batman and Micke K ran first, with down-time for a clean-up after Duncan Micallef went k'boom! Oops indeed, but there y'go - the layouts are done an' dusted!

At left is the official announcement on SantaPodTV's LIVE show as one of Gabby McDonald's crew checks the track surface. Shortly later, Gabby came out in her Rune Fjeld Motorsports fueler, hoping to make her final pass to gain a Top Fuel licence



You just know those Irish eyes were smiling as she rolled out and made her burnout - and boy did she kick butt! The yellow blur at right is ol' Nitro Nostril's shooting the image below, thanks Andy



mcSnips courtesy
SantaPodTV
Santa Pod TV



Photo courtesy Andy Willsheer



Gabby was on a pass, hitting the eighth with a 3.24flat at 246.33, and then problems set in. She lost a cylinder, pedaled it then started mixing 'em up as you can see from these Snips, yet she still clocked a 4.11 at 266.55mph, the quickest run of the afternoon - and third quickest of the day!

Congratulations and good luck to Gabby McDonald, FIA licensed Top Fuel pilot and ready to race!



Sadly those facts never made it to SantaPodTV, even when they used her car for PR purposes! Thing is, without the malfunction, Gabby would've been a real 4-zero hero!



I've always thought bike racers are nuts – yet you know they have a ball on wild rides like these, but the wheelie above probably cost him the race, and maybe the one below too!



Huge smokey burnouts are said to aid traction, but in this case it was just a thrill for the fans as you can see below...



The FIA Pro Stock championship battle came down to this race, and Jimmy Alund's blue car led from the hit; his stout 6.57 at 211.10 beat Magnus Pettersson's 6.63 at 208.00 to win the title by a tenth and a half. Having that happen in the final race of the year made for an exciting Pro Stock season!



Sweden's Johan Lindberg had won the FIA alcohol Funny Car title and qualified on the pole at the US Nats and again here at the Pod. In the final he met second generation rookie racer Gareth Ellis, who'd qualified third in the six-car field with personnel best of 5.698 at 250.99mph. As you can see from Wojtek's shot, the FIA champ had problems at the hit and got sideways, leaving Ellis to get his first event win with a 5.774 at 249.59



In August 2013 at Tierp, Jonnie Lindberg set the speed at 268.86mph; at the 2013 FIA Finals he set the FIA TAFC ET record at 5.426, backed up with a 5.469 – those records stand to this day!

The FIA's top alcohol title was won by Chris Polidano, but the Habermann brothers made it to the final, where Timo's car fired on its own. After the burnout, the car was backed up with a Union Jack in tribute to the Pod fans that'd been so supportive of the teams. Then he made a wild wheels-up launch



Timo's still wide open and haulin' the mail here, but he soon clicked it off and cruised on through for the win



FIA Top Fuel champion Thomas Nataas ended his season in style with an almost laid back 4.02 at 303.85. Urs Erbacher was mixing cylinders from the hit – and hidden by that VIP pole!



Then Urs shook the tyres, following Batman through the lights with a 4.28 at 285.72



Sadly Per and Karsten Andersen and Thomas Nataas announced they were retiring from racing – which is a real bummer for us nitro lovin' fans. Still I guess we should be grateful for the years of power performance they've shown us and wish them well



It was bad enough that the European Nitro Funny Car series only had three cars, but even less of a thrill when the Shockwave fuel coupe did not answer the call. Kevin Kent did his best for the fans, starting with a strong burnout





These VIP fans seem to be enjoying the spectacle, but drag racers are meant to do it in pairs!

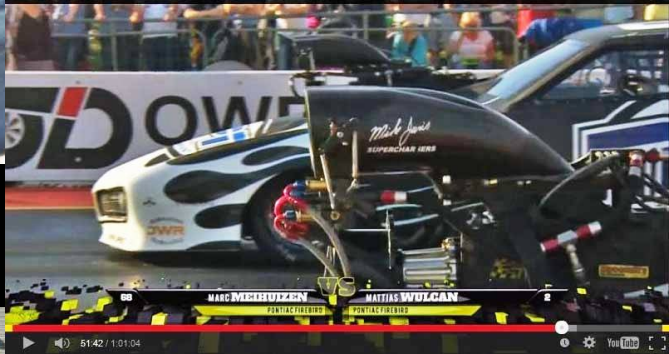


ASA

Regular fans got to feel the sound of NitroThunder – but not for long as Kevin clicked it off early to a 4.55 at 241mph



2014 FIA / FIM European Championship Final Round - Santa Pod Raceway, England



Getting quite fond of that VIP lamp post – not! Wojtek shot the launch, and once again these Snips from SantaPodTV show that the Pro Modified final was a doozy – love the Snip at right



Newly crowned FIA Pro Mod champ Mattias Wulcan won a pedal fest final with a 10.36. Both cars were out of shape and Marc Meihuizen was disqualified for hitting the wall and crossing the centre line

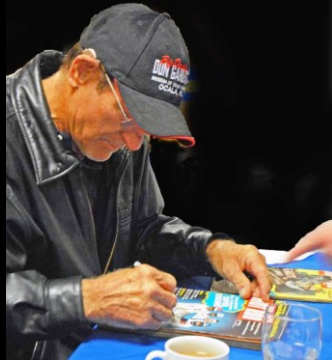
All FIA race data courtesy eurodragster.com

Wow dudes!

Presented by TJ Zizzo and Rustoleom
courtesy LithyNoonProductions and ESPN

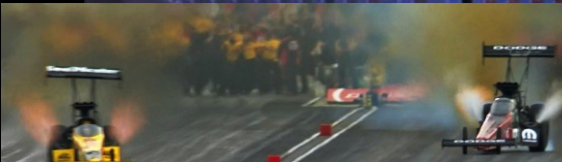
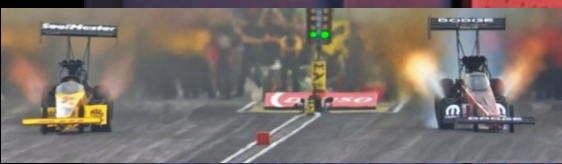
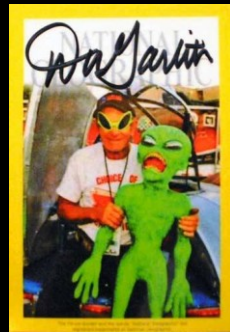


Talk about cool – following a “gi-normous” explosion those were the words uttered by TJ Zizzo during his first round ride at the US Nationals. “Wow Dudes” indeed. Click kit and enjoy some excellent ESPN in y’face coverage of this conflagration! In Las Vegas later that year TJ had the dubious distinction of holding the bump at 3.835 in the quickest 16 car field in short track history behind J.R. Todd’s 3.732; j’st saying. At the 2020 Indy US Nats TJ, who’d made it to his first final round at the rained out NHRA Summernats in July, finally got to race Justin Ashley. The young driver left first (below left), but TJ soon caught him and was a tenth quicker at the eighth before his motor began to go away; Ashley moved on by to take his first victory (at the US Nats!), 3.95 to 4.05...



mcSnip courtesy nhra.tv

The sunset below was shot at Santa Pod; inside the VIP suite, Big Daddy Don Garlits had just finished talking to a bunch of lucky fans while I’d been stuck in a horrendous traffic jam back in London. No problem, at least I’d not been involved in the incident which caused it. Whilst I was there Don signed copies of his book for the guests (it’s a great read), and many other items including this pile of Hot Rod magazines one fan had bought, many featuring Big Daddy on the cover. I too had some photos signed for future viewing, but for now here’s a shot of Don with a pal at the US Nats



Love this cool shot of DSR’s Leah Pruett’s Dodge SRT Top Fuel ride that she took to the US Nats finals last Sunday, going down to Kalitta Motorsports’ DHL fueler driven by Shawn Langdon to a hard-earned victory

mcSnips courtesy nhra.tv