



## **TONY SCHUMACHER: Driver, U.S. Army Top Fuel Dragster**

**Birthdate:** Dec. 25, 1969

**Birthplace:** Chicago

**Hometown:** Long Grove, Illinois

**Residence:** Austin, Texas

**Spouse:** Cara

**Children:** Anthony, Michael, Jacqueline

“There’s nothing in the world like beating guys who are hard to beat.”

The competitive desire to beat the best was ingrained in Tony Schumacher’s spirit early in life. It started early in his youth growing up in the Chicago area. Maybe it sunk in as he watched some of the greatest straight-line drivers talk racing in his dad’s garage and was underscored by the impact of a late 1970s racing film called “The Quick and the Dead” on him.

Today, Schumacher remains one of the most driven individuals who competes for a living.

His flair for the dramatic has never flickered. All he wants is for the final of run of every season to offer the very opportunity he asks for at the start of each season – being on the line racing not only for one final victory but also the chance to secure the season championship, all in less than four seconds.

“Big moments are what life’s all about.”

There have been plenty since Schumacher’s first competition on the track. He began by racing in a 160-mph Super Comp dragster during the 1992 season. The acceleration of his path to greatness moved quickly the following two years when he drove Wayne Knuth’s 290-mph Odyssey Jet dragster during the 1993 and 1994 campaigns.

He graduated to a Top Alcohol Funny Car for the 1995 and 1996 seasons. He got his first big break during the 42<sup>nd</sup> annual U.S. Nationals in 1996 in Indy, finding himself in the middle of a huge moment. Schumacher had positioned himself for a shot in the Peek Brothers’ dragster for the season’s biggest race, and he was hoping to simply make the 16-car field.

That goal was accomplished as he qualified 16<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately, his first run was a single as No. 1 qualifier Blaine Johnson perished following a qualifying run the day before. The 1996 U.S. Nationals provided a hint of things to come for Schumacher as he raced all the way to the final and made it known he was more than just the son of the 1970 U.S. Nationals Funny Car champion.

After competing in three more national events to close the 1996 campaign, Schumacher competed in every NHRA national event the following season, making two final-round appearances during his first full season in the Top Fuel division. A final-round appearance in the second annual NHRA Matco Tools Supernationals near Houston late in the year highlighted the 1998 season, when he competed in only 13 events.

With four final-round appearances on his resume entering the 1999 season, he was confident that his first drive for a team owned by his father would be a memorable one. Through 22 events in 1999, Schumacher exhibited signs of greatness. He became the first driver to eclipse the 330-mph barrier (330.23) at Phoenix and earned four more final-round starts. Schumacher recorded his first career Top Fuel triumph in the 20<sup>th</sup> event of the season, at the Texas Motorplex in Ennis. The victory propelled him to his first Top Fuel crown.

The next three seasons offered plenty of highs and lows for Schumacher. The 2000 campaign was highlighted by his four victories, including his first at the U.S. Nationals, which came in U.S. Army colors to begin a remarkable partnership that still thrives today. The lowlight was an October accident in Memphis that left him with a fractured left tibia, a broken bone in his right ankle, a bruised eye and forced him to miss multiple events. The 2001 season saw Schumacher reach only one final round – at Bristol (Tenn.) Dragway – but included a new NHRA speed record (333.08 mph) in Reading. He would finish eighth in the standings. The following season, he was top qualifier six times, went to five finals and won twice. The second victory was his second consecutive U.S. Nationals triumph.

The 2003 season was a turning point in Schumacher's career. A June victory at his hometown Route 66 Raceway near Chicago kicked off an incredible run. Schumacher was teamed with crew chief Alan Johnson starting with that race and began building what would become an almost unstoppable combination in the category for years to come. A Brainerd (Minn.) Raceway victory was their second triumph and provided plenty of momentum for "The Sarge" to capture his third consecutive U.S. Nationals victory. Schumacher would finish third in the standings, but the foundation was set for the greatness that would follow.

In 2004, Schumacher was out to prove the U.S. Army team was too strong to be stopped by anyone. He made his statement when it counted most, beginning with a triumph in the season-opening Winternationals at Auto Club Raceway in Pomona, Calif. That was the first of an NHRA single-season record 10 victories, which also included triumphs in the Gatornationals in Gainesville, Fla., his fourth U.S. Nationals in Indy and the season-finale in Pomona. The domination concluded with Schumacher earning his second NHRA Top Fuel World Championship and first carrying the U.S. Army colors.

The strength of the Army team carried on in 2005 with Schumacher winning another world championship on the strength of nine victories. He closed the season with a record five consecutive victories and also added several more records during the campaign, including elapsed time and speed world records (4.437 seconds, 336.15 mph), single-season record for final rounds (seven), single-season record for round wins (20) and single-season record for most No. 1 qualifying positions (11). Schumacher clinched his third title in Las Vegas, the second-to-last event of the campaign.

"You don't want the ride to stop," Schumacher said when asked about the 2005 season. "I guess that's what happens when you are coming off the kind of season we had."

Following two consecutive championships, Schumacher aimed his goals higher than he ever could have imagined in 2006. Coming off his record-shattering season in 2005, the U.S. Army team got off to a slow start setting up one of the most dramatic championship runs the sport has ever seen. He didn't make a final round until winning in June at St. Louis. He trailed in the championship standings by 336 points at midseason. The second-half push was vintage Schumacher as he scored wins in Seattle, raced to his fifth victory at the U.S. Nationals and won in Las Vegas to give himself a chance in the finale at Pomona. The deck was stacked against him at Pomona, but once Doug Kalitta was eliminated in the semifinals, the door was open for Schumacher. In what has become known as "The Run," Schumacher set a world record to not only win the 35<sup>th</sup> race of his career, but claim his third consecutive Top Fuel title in stunning fashion.

With the remarkable conclusion to the 2006 season, it was going to be difficult to repeat both the drama and results, but the U.S. Army team was up to the challenge in 2007. Winning six times during the season and capturing his sixth U.S. Nationals set the groundwork for chasing history and his fourth consecutive world championship. Like the year before, it required a monumental weekend for the U.S. Army team to come out on top. It once again came down to Schumacher winning the season finale and, just like a Hollywood script, he came through with not only a victory, but also his fourth straight world championship.

Schumacher dominated en route to a fifth consecutive title in 2008, winning an NHRA Top Fuel-record 15 races, including a record seven in a row. That incredible season earned him Driver of the Year honors among all North American motorsports competitors.

The championship string reached six in 2009, but this title was different on so many levels. Following the 2008 season, Schumacher assembled a new team led by Mike Green when former tuner Johnson became team manager with the newly formed Al-Anabi team and hired rival driver Larry Dixon. The reworked Army team won the season's fourth event in Houston, which included a semifinal victory over Dixon, and followed with wins in Las Vegas, Bristol and Schumacher's eighth U.S. Nationals triumph. Another triumph at Texas and a final-round appearance in Memphis positioned "The Sarge" for another title run. Ironically, he was tied with Dixon heading into the season finale. But Schumacher rose to the occasion again, earning the top qualifier spot and two additional points. When Dixon was eliminated in the semis, Schumacher clinched his record sixth consecutive Top Fuel championship.

"Of all the championships, this one ranks pretty far up there," Schumacher said after earning his sixth title. "Having to go out with Mike (Green) and build a new team and go through the adversity, it's outstanding to be standing here on the podium. Nobody expected us to win a race, much less a title."

The title run came to a close in 2010 with Schumacher finishing second in the championship standings. He was in title contention throughout the campaign, posting wins in Gainesville, St. Louis, Topeka, Bristol, Dallas and Las Vegas. He was hoping the October victory in Las Vegas would propel him to another magical run in Pomona and continue his championship run. Unfortunately, he could not overcome the 85-point deficit.

After dominating the first decade of the new millennium, Schumacher and the U.S. Army had a frustrating season in 2011. Schumacher made seven final round appearances but came up short each time en route to a fifth-place finish in the standings. During the six-race Countdown to the Championship, he earned a pair of No. 1 qualifying positions and set a national speed record (327.90 mph) at Charlotte.

The first goal for the 2012 season was to end his winless streak that stretched from Las Vegas in October 2010 through the entire 2011 campaign. The streak was nearly stopped twice as he made final-round appearances in the second and third events of the year at Phoenix and Gainesville, respectively. Finally, in June, "The Sarge" sliced through the field with precision at Bristol, capturing his 68<sup>th</sup> career victory.

During the next two months, the U.S. Army team positioned itself for a coveted spot in the Countdown with an eye on having a chance to earn an eighth championship. In late August, Schumacher made his first run with the innovative canopy cockpit on his U.S. Army dragster and promptly earned top qualifying honors in Brainerd. Three weeks later, it was business as usual for Schumacher at the U.S. Nationals. He raced through the field en route to his ninth victory in the sport's biggest event, breaking his tie with the legendary "Big Daddy" Don Garlits for most U.S. Nationals wins in Top Fuel. The triumph fueled the U.S. Army team's run into the six-race Countdown. A runner-up finish in Charlotte pushed Schumacher to the top of the standings, but three second-round losses all but put his championship aspirations out of reach.

But Schumacher once again was ready to play out the Hollywood script in Southern California on the season's final day. After seeing leader Antron Brown go out in the first round, he knew the championship was still available. Second-round and semifinal victories put "The Sarge" on the cusp and once again in a very big moment. But this time he came .0081 of a second short of winning his 70<sup>th</sup> career event title and, subsequently, an eighth championship.

That near-title run in 2012 was followed by a 2013 season that started in typical championship form, with Schumacher grabbing event titles at Phoenix, Las Vegas and his Chicago stomping grounds through the opening 11 events. He also advanced to three other final-round appearances over that span – the Pomona season opener, the spring Charlotte event, and Topeka, Kan. Well-positioned atop the standings, the U.S. Army team made the calculated decision to begin testing high-tech parts and pieces on the legendary Dragster that would enable a strong run during the all-important Countdown to the Mello Yello Championship over the final six events of the season. But, Schumacher ended up advancing as far as the semifinal round only twice over the next 13 events and he finished seventh in the final standings, ending his streak of top-five finishes in the season-ending points at 11.

"It was only frustrating because we made some changes that, in all reality, should win you a championship," Schumacher said. "They had in the past but, in 2013, they just didn't work out. We've had the winter to figure it out. We've battled through adversity so many times, it's what we do."

The competitive desire is as strong as ever and, unquestionably, Schumacher has his mind set on adding more chapters to his incredible story of success.

After seven career Top Fuel titles, Schumacher's 2014 championship run just may be his most gratifying. After 18 months of adversity developing the U.S. Army team's brand new six-disc clutch system, the U.S. Army team opened the 2014 Countdown to the Championship on a tear, winning three of the first four playoff events at Charlotte, Dallas and Reading to go with his regular-season wins at Las Vegas and Epping, New Hampshire. With a 109-point lead heading to Pomona, Schumacher clinched his eighth career Top Fuel world championship during final-round qualifying on Saturday.

Throughout his career, Schumacher always has pushed for advanced safety. In 2008, Schumacher and fellow NHRA legends John Force and Kenny Bernstein were instrumental in the development of a sensor that detects backfire in a nitromethane engine and takes corrective steps to protect the driver by shutting down the fuel pump and deploying the parachutes. In 2012, Schumacher competed with the canopy that was developed by Don Schumacher Racing (DSR), led by his crew chief Green, as well as James Brendel and the Indianapolis-based Aerodine Composites Group.

Schumacher's success has earned the driver numerous awards, including Driver of the Year, Economaki Champion of Champions and First Team All-American by the American Auto Racing Writers and Broadcasters Association.

Since the 2000 season, when the U.S. Army teamed with DSR and Schumacher, the seven-time World Champion has been "impassioned" in the Army philosophy. Not only does he wear the colors with pride and honor the opportunity to do so, he has been involved in numerous activities showing his dedication to his country, and to his relationship with the Soldiers he is honored to represent. He has made numerous visits to bases, including Fort Bragg, Fort Benning and Joint Base Lewis McCord, and has traveled to Iraq and Afghanistan on a goodwill tour for the troops. On the 10-year anniversary of 9/11, Schumacher traveled to Washington, D.C., to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the 9/11 Memorial at the Pentagon. In December 2009, he delivered his 2009 NHRA Top Fuel trophy to Fort Hood and dedicated the championship to the fallen soldiers at the base from an earlier tragedy. Schumacher also has made multiple visits to Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital in Washington, D.C., and made a pair of airplane jumps with the U.S. Army Golden Knights.

Away from the track, Schumacher has many interests, starting with his family. He is married to Cara and father to sons Anthony and Michael and daughter Jacqueline. He enjoys rides on his Harley-Davidson motorcycle, and his hobbies include hockey, fly-fishing, golf and racquetball.

Schumacher and his family moved midway through the 2014 season from their longtime residence in the Chicago area to Austin, Texas.