



# TONY SCHUMACHER & ANTRON BROWN

## *U.S. Army Duo Separated by Just 65 Points Headed to Championship Showdown in Pomona*

POMONA, Calif. (Nov. 6, 2012) – Considering leadership goes hand-in-hand with all things U.S. Army, it's no surprise the NHRA Full Throttle Drag Racing Series Top Fuel championship heads to this weekend's season-ending Auto Club NHRA Finals at Auto Club Raceway in Pomona, Calif., with a U.S. Army driving duo occupying the top two spots in the standings.

After all, the Army is the Nation's preeminent leadership experience, where the Nation's future leaders are developed and are empowered with the confidence to take decisive action when needed and the flexibility to excel in constantly evolving situations.

It took a near-perfect penultimate round at Las Vegas two weekends ago for seven-time Top Fuel champ Tony "The Sarge" Schumacher and his U.S. Army Dragster to pull within 65 points of his championship-leading Don Schumacher Racing teammate Antron Brown and the Matco Tools/U.S. Army team.

Schumacher more than halved Brown's 136-point lead in the standings at The Strip at Las Vegas Motor Speedway by blazing to a top qualifying effort and then advancing all the way to the final round of eliminations. Brown, meanwhile, fought electrical gremlins throughout the weekend and was eliminated in the first round for only the third time in 22 events this season.

A similar combination of occurrences at Pomona would give Schumacher his eighth career Top Fuel title while Brown is in the driver's seat and can earn his first career championship by exhibiting the speed and consistency that has netted a series-high six wins and five runner-up finishes thus far this season. Brown can clinch the title by scoring 86 points of a possible 150 available this weekend.

Overcoming sizeable points deficits en route to the Top Fuel crown, however, is certainly nothing new for Schumacher, who won his first Top Fuel title in 1999 and then rattled off six consecutive championships from 2004 through 2009. In 2006, he trailed Doug Kalitta by 45 points heading to Pomona but won the event thanks to a record-setting pass in the final round to cleared the title by 14 points. It was particularly satisfying as the U.S. Army team overcame a 336-point deficit at the season's midpoint. In 2007, Schumacher trailed Rod Fuller by 68 points heading to Pomona, but Fuller was eliminated in the first round and Schumacher won the event once again and finished 19 points ahead for the championship.

In all, Schumacher has six career wins at Pomona to tie him with the legendary "Big Daddy" Don Garlits as the winningest drivers at Auto Club Raceway. Schumacher and Garlits also were the winningest Top Fuel drivers at the U.S. Nationals with eight victories apiece before Schumacher won his ninth career event at Lucas Oil Raceway in Indianapolis this past September.

This weekend, Schumacher knows full well that emerging from Pomona with championship number eight will take a level of engineering and teamwork by his U.S. Army team that reflects the Army's leading-edge technology and the powerful, realistic training of its Army Strong Soldiers. It almost worked to perfection two weekends ago at Las Vegas. Now, it's time to go one better and then hope for the best.

### ***TONY "THE SARGE" SCHUMACHER, driver of the U.S. Army Top Fuel Dragster:***

**Your seven championships have come a number of different ways, but it looks like this year has been the most competitive the series has ever been. How does this year's championship chase compare to the others?**

"I think, and I've said it all along, this is the best class of cars that has ever been put together. And I don't believe I've ever been more proud to be representing the U.S. Army in this competitive environment. As I've also said all along, only the strongest wear our colors, and the U.S. Army Soldiers we represent possess a mental, emotional and physical strength like no other. Likewise, the U.S. Army team reflects those strengths. That said, there are more great cars than we've ever seen – great drivers, great teams. We seem to have all settled into a pretty good home between the drivers and the crew chiefs, and the battles are incredible. There are nine or 10 cars that are extremely good. The guy who stands on the podium at the end is going to be well-deserving of the Full Throttle championship. That's it. Because it has been as difficult as anything I've ever seen, I've had to drive better. Antron (Brown), Spencer (Massey), all of us have had to drive better. All the drivers with the experience have had to rise way beyond what we've had to rise to before. And experience is paying off right now. It is incredible. I told the guys last weekend, it has been a number of years since we've seen something so good, such high class of racing. We're not seeing games played on the starting line, we're seeing good, solid, wicked, difficult races."

-more-

**Does this particular run for the championship compare to any of your past championships?**

“A couple of them. I mean, I came back from 336 points the year before the Countdown. That was simply amazing. It wasn’t nine cars, but (Doug) Kalitta was so hard to beat. And then, when I showed up at Pomona in ’07, I was in fourth place and I think I was 65 or 70 points out of the lead. To win that, not only did the points leader have to go out first round, but I had to get around, I think, (Brandon) Bernstein and (Larry) Dixon, and Antron had been up in the points pretty good for most of that year, too, where he was at last year. But it was incredible. I have lived some great moments, and I can only say that. At the end of my career, I will be able to look back and think, there have been very few years that haven’t been extremely gratifying. This will be at the top of the list if we can pull this off. Or if Antron does it or if Spencer does it, I will guarantee you, because theirs is going to be a first. It’s going to be incredibly gratifying for the amount of work and dedication they had to put into this year.”

**You seem to be at your best at this time every year. What is it about crunch time that enables you to be so successful?**

“I absolutely love the end of the year. The last eight runs, the last two race weekends, have always been our best. They’ve been the ones where you had to win, and we’ve performed the best for whatever reason. In the beginning, I always said if you want to see me drop the ball, take the pressure away because I let my guard down. But when it’s time to be really, really good, we’re good at that. I think it’s kind of funny we’re 65 points off. I’ve showed up at Pomona 45 points back, we went to the semis and we still won. Now, it’s 65 points and it’s like we needed something new, a little more of a challenge. The end of the year is what it’s all about, what we race all year for. It’s what we expect to be good at and we’re required to be good at. I always wanted the ball in my hands for the last shot, and I always wanted to sit in a seat and have to win to be the champ, not hope someone else loses. I think Antron is in a really good spot right now. He’s ahead of us, but he’s not that kind of guy. He does not want to have to watch someone lose, he wants to close the deal, just like we do. At the awards banquet, we all want to be on that stage. It used to be there were one or two good cars and everyone else was fighting for third and fourth. It’s different. There are a lot of great cars. But this is a pressure cooker. This is what it’s all about.”

***ANTRON BROWN, driver of the Matco Tools/U.S. Army Top Fuel Dragster:*****You’ve had a solid year and are in position to win your first career Top Fuel title. Talk about how the year has gone as we head to the season finale.**

“At the beginning of the year, everybody is kind of just jelling. Everybody is trying to get in their groove. That’s what our team did. It’s like the U.S. Army preparing for battle – each and member of our team plays a vital role in the success of the car on the track, just like every Soldier, no matter which of the more than 150 career options he or she chooses in the Army, is vital to the success of the mission. We were just working hard at it and we were just trying to come up with a consistent, fast package to go along and compete with the cars that we have because, if you look at the competition we have in our class this year, everybody is in the 70s (3.70-second range). Everybody. Before, there were like four cars that could run 70 – our three (Don Schumacher Racing) cars and maybe the Al Anabi car. And now you have over 10 teams that can run 70s. That tells you the difference of how everything just stepped up this year, especially once we got into the Countdown. And when we go into this last race, we’ve set ourselves up with a chance to win it all. We are going in better than we did last year. Last year we went 18 points behind. This year we’re going in with a points lead and our main deal is we want to race here. I want to do what we did in (Las) Vegas and do it all over again in Pomona. I want to race. So we’ll go out there and try to qualify well, and I just want to be competitive throughout the whole event and just go into race day taking it one round at a time like we did all year long, and that’s what we’re shooting for. We stayed out (in Las Vegas) and tested Monday, and we made four great runs in testing, and we just want to carry that on to Pomona so we can continue with Tony and Spencer, Langdon and the rest of the whole field because we don’t have to worry about each other anymore. That’s what we did at the beginning of the year – we just worried about each other because, when you look at the stats, the only people we lost to in those were our own teammates. Now, you see in these later rounds everybody else is definitely picking up the slack, and they’ve been taking us out. They’ve been taking each and every one of us out, being very competitive, and they’re right there. That’s just how tough our class has gotten.”

**Much is made of how Tony Schumacher and his team seem to thrive on the pressure of the final event weekends. What are your thoughts on that?**

“Yeah, and the thing about it is me and Tony go back a ways with this deal, even when I wasn’t racing Top Fuel. One thing about it is, up at the Don Schumacher camp, when I was racing Pro Stock Motorcycle, I watched Tony win numerous championships, come from behind, dominate, won 15 races one season. And my deal was always that I was a student. I always sat back and looked, trying to learn what makes these people so great. This guy is making history all the time. You wonder what is it that he’s got over everybody else? And then, when you see him talk, like we always do at meet-and-greets, he goes through his epic stories and talks about his battles out there and what he and his team have achieved, and the one thing you can see is that he lives for those moments. Like, when the pressure is on, how do you rise to the occasion? If you ask him how he looks at the high-pressure stakes and the pressure situation, he says, ‘I just do what I do. I go in and give it all I’ve got – nothing more, nothing less.’”

-more-

**You had some serious momentum going before you went out in the first round at Las Vegas. How tough was that?**

“It was a little disheartening because we struggled all through qualifying and we got our first lap down the track and everything was fine. We weren’t very aggressive. We just wanted to go A to B and, afterward, we had some electrical problems and we had it fixed at the Friday-night session because it burnt our computer out of our car, and it continued on Saturday. So we actually found out what the root cause of it was, we replaced everything on our car, and we came out for first round and we had a brand new part malfunction where our control module box just didn’t work, and we had no clutch. So we stepped on the gas and the clutch never moved, so we lost first round. It was one of those fluke deals where all these things were going wrong. We were still just trying to fight to stay there. We wanted to race. When we went out first round, it kind of took a little wind out of our sails because that’s the worst feeling in the world just to sit there and watch everybody else race and collect points. We know how great our teammates are. We know how great their cars are. We know how good their teams are. We know what kind of drivers they are. Tony is a seven-time world champ. Spencer has been there running for the championship each and every year. He just missed it last year by like two-thousandths of a second to be a world champ. We know how good they are, and to sit on the sidelines and watch them race and you’re out and you can’t do anything about it, everybody else was there watching the drama just looking at us and saying, ‘Are you hoping your teammates to go out?’ No, I want my teammates to go out and race, and if they get beat, they get beat. I’d rather be out there racing with them and controlling my own destiny rather than looking at other people race.”

-TSC-

Contact Bill Klingbeil or Laz Denes with True Speed Communication

Klingbeil: (704) 875-3388, ext. 804 or [Bill.Klingbeil@TrueSpeedCommunication.com](mailto:Bill.Klingbeil@TrueSpeedCommunication.com)

Denes: (704) 875-3388, ext. 806 or [Laz.Denes@TrueSpeedCommunication.com](mailto:Laz.Denes@TrueSpeedCommunication.com)

[www.TrueSpeedCommunication.com](http://www.TrueSpeedCommunication.com) • Online Media Kit Available at: [www.TrueSpeedMedia.com](http://www.TrueSpeedMedia.com)