



U.S. Army Team Takes NHRA Arizona Nationals

Schumacher Eliminates Fellow Army Driver Brown in Semifinal, Beats Lucas in Wild Final To Assume Huge Top Fuel Points Lead After Opening Two Events of 2013

Date: Feb. 24, 2013

Event: 29th NHRA Arizona Nationals (Round 2 of 24)

Series: NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series

Location: Firebird International Raceway in Chandler, Ariz.

Top Fuel Winner: Tony Schumacher of Don Schumacher Racing

U.S. Army Racing Finish: Tony Schumacher – started 3rd, beat Morgan Lucas in final.
Antron Brown – started 2nd, lost to Schumacher in semifinals.

Back-to-back weekends to open the season, back-to-back event final appearances, one event title and a whopping lead in the point standings – to say Tony “The Sarge” Schumacher and the U.S. Army Top Fuel Dragster team for Don Schumacher Racing are on a roll might be the understatement of the 2013 NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series thus far.

But considering the Army is the Nation’s preeminent leadership experience, where the Nation’s future leaders are developed and empowered with the confidence to take decisive action when needed and the flexibility to excel in constantly evolving situations, it’s perhaps fitting that Schumacher put the exclamation point on the season’s opening two events with a final-round victory Sunday over Morgan Lucas to capture his fourth career NHRA Arizona Nationals at Firebird International Raceway just outside Phoenix and the 70th event title of his illustrious career.

“I like that number,” said Schumacher, whose fourth consecutive final-round appearance dating back to last season’s penultimate round at Las Vegas netted his first event title since he captured his record-tying ninth career U.S. Nationals title in Indianapolis last September. “I was stuck on 69 for a long time and it’s like, you know, great car, great final rounds, great matches, and people were beating us and it was tough. You start to wonder what you have to do to win one of these things. We’ve got this phenomenal car that goes out and runs incredibly well and you get beat. People know what they have to do when they run against the Army car and they do a great job. The Army is the strength of the Nation, the Soldiers are the strength of our Army, and this Army-NHRA partnership provides Americans a platform to experience the power, speed, teamwork and technology that drives that strength. In that final round today, it was both of us not taking each other for granted. Both cars were set up fast and we both lost it – smoked the tires, but it was an awful lot of fun.”

Compared to the precision and consistency Schumacher and the U.S. Army team have exhibited qualifying session after qualifying session and elimination round after elimination round so far this season, today’s final-round run was quite the wild ride as both drivers smoked their tires at the starting line and had to work hard to keep their Dragsters under control all the way to the finish line, which Schumacher crossed just .0385 of a second – or 15 feet – ahead of Lucas. Schumacher clocked in at 4.606 seconds at 213.20 mph while Lucas’ run was 4.652 seconds at 258.67 mph – a far cry from the 330-mph runs typical of these Top Fuel Dragsters.

“The fans got their money’s worth on that run,” Schumacher said. “It was pedal, pedal, lift, pedal, straighten the car out, do it again. I loved it. It’s cowboy stuff. I enjoy that kind of race more than the record-setting ones we’ve had over the years. That still proves you have to put a driver in these cars and drive these things. We ran incredibly well all weekend. All you have to do is be a machine and do the same thing, win rounds and win rounds, but those runs are the ones that are just fun. People have to understand this is still what we love. It’s a job and we enjoy it and we go out and win for the Army, but when you go out and win ugly like that, it’s just fun – crazy, but fun.”

After qualifying third behind Doug Kalitta and his U.S. Army and Don Schumacher Racing teammate Antron Brown, Schumacher beat Brazilian Sidnei Frigo and Dubai’s Khalid alBalooshi in the opening two rounds of eliminations today. Brown, meanwhile, disposed of Terry McMillan and Leah Pruett to set up a semifinal matchup against Schumacher.

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Schumacher prevailed against Brown, the defending Top Fuel champion, thanks to a .052-of-a-second to .083-of-a-second advantage in reaction time. Schumacher crossed the finish line just 9 feet (.0182 of a second) ahead of Brown to reach the 121st event final of his career.

“Anytime you can make it to the semifinals, it’s a great weekend because you’re winning rounds,” said Brown, who clearly shook off any after effects from his horrific crash last Sunday at Pomona, Calif., during a quarterfinal-round victory. “I’m just so proud of my team for all the hard work they put in this week. We came out here with a brand new car, qualified second and ran low E.T. of the semifinals. You can’t ask for more than that. I’m just stoked to go back home, regroup and go back to work harder. We’ll come out in Gainesville with our heads down and fight that fight again. I’m looking forward to it.”

With two events complete on the 24-event NHRA Mello Yellow Drag Racing Series calendar for 2013, the top-10 drivers in the Top Fuel standings are:

- 1. Tony Schumacher (228 points)**
2. Shawn Langdon (149 points, -79)
- 3. Antron Brown (148 points, -80)**
4. Khalid alBalooshi (131 points, -97)
5. Morgan Lucas (124 points, -104)
6. David Grubnic (112 points, -116)
7. Doug Kalitta (103 points, -125)
8. Spencer Massey (100 points, -128)
9. Brandon Bernstein (93 points, -135)
10. Larry Dixon (86 points, -142)

The next event is the 44th annual Amalie Oil NHRA Gatornationals March 15-17 at Auto Plus Raceway in Gainesville, Fla. ESPN2’s delayed broadcast of the elimination rounds Sunday, March 17 is set for 7-10 p.m. EST.

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