



Thrilling 1-2 Finish in 2012 Title Chase for U.S. Army Duo *Schumacher Needs To Sweep NHRA's Final Day at Pomona and Nearly Pulls it Off;* *Teammate Brown Clinches First Career Top Fuel Championship*

Date: Nov. 11, 2012

Event: Automobile Club of Southern California NHRA Finals (Round 23 of 23)

Series: NHRA Full Throttle Drag Racing Series

Location: Auto Club Raceway in Pomona, Calif.

Top Fuel Winner: Brandon Bernstein of Morgan Lucas Racing

U.S. Army Racing Finish: Tony Schumacher – started 4th, lost to Bernstein in final, finishes second in 2012 Top Fuel championship
Antron Brown – started 10th, lost to Spencer Massey in first round, **wins 2012 Top Fuel championship**

It's fitting that on Veteran's Day 2012, the NHRA Full Throttle Drag Racing Series Top Fuel world championship came down to the U.S. Army duo of Tony "The Sarge" Schumacher and Antron Brown in dramatic fashion during Sunday's Auto Club of Southern California NHRA Finals at Auto Club Raceway in Pomona, Calif.

Schumacher and the U.S. Army team of Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) started the day trailing fellow DSR driver Brown and the Matco Tools/U.S. Army dragster by 67 points atop the Top Fuel standings. Considering the Army is the Nation's preeminent leadership experience, in which 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, occupying the top two positions in the standings entering the season's final day of competition came as no surprise.

Brown's marching orders were quite simple if he was to clinch his first career Top Fuel championship with control of his own destiny – survive the opening two elimination rounds. But a mechanical failure during his first-round run against fellow DSR driver Spencer Massey, the only other driver with a mathematical chance to win the Top Fuel title entering today, ended Brown's day prematurely and forced him to sweat out his championship fate from the sidelines. It also opened the door for Schumacher or Massey to steal the Top Fuel title, but only with an overall event win.

While Schumacher, the seven-time Top Fuel champion, advanced through the opening two rounds with precision-like passes that eliminated J.R. Todd in the first round and Khalid alBalooshi in the second round, Massey lost his second-round matchup against Brandon Bernstein and left the championship up to DSR's U.S. Army duo while having to settle for third in the final standings.

Continuing to exhibit the mental, emotional and physical strength like the U.S. Army Soldiers he represents, Schumacher won his semifinal-round matchup over Bob Vandergriff to set up a dramatic Top Fuel final against Bernstein while Brown continued to watch from the sidelines.

Needing the victory over Bernstein to claim his eighth career Top Fuel title and first since 2009, Schumacher posted an impressive 3.753-second run at 325.53 mph against Bernstein's run of 3.762 seconds at 320.81 mph. But Bernstein's reaction time of 0.037 of a second versus Schumacher's 0.054 of a second made the difference and gave Bernstein his first Top Fuel overall event win since 2009 and, more significantly, clinched the championship for Brown by a mere seven points.

"There's no good way to lose," said Schumacher, who lost for the third time this season to Bernstein after having beaten him in all five previous matchups at Pomona. "We had a good (reaction) light. You can't do much better than that. You go out and take a shot like that and win the race. Hat's off to Brandon and his team. It's been a long time since they have won a race. It's tough to get beat like that. Most of those holeshots are about where you stage the cars. I had a great U.S. Army car. (Crew chief) Mike (Green) gave me a good car. You know, it felt great. It got to the end and the win light did not come on. I never saw him or heard him. It had to be inches. It had to be a phenomenal race. We gave the fans what they came to see. I would have really liked to see the Army car win on Veteran's Day for all the Soldiers out there. Each and every member of our U.S. Army Racing team has played a vital role in the success of our car on the track this season, 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. Our mission was clear, and we came oh-so-close to pulling it off. It's just a disappointment. I'm sure Antron's back there celebrating. He's going to be a great champion."

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Bernstein's victory made him the 10th first-time winner in the season's 23 events, and his margin of victory in the final over Schumacher was just eight thousandths of a second. For Schumacher, a two-time event winner this season with victories at Bristol and Indianapolis, it was his sixth final-round appearance and third in the sixth Countdown to the Championship playoff events.

Meanwhile, Brown's first career NHRA championship came in his fifth Top Fuel season. He became the 18th different Top Fuel world champion in history. His previous best season-ending points finishes of third came in 2009 and 2011.

"I'm just beside myself right now," said Brown, who suffered superficial burns to the palms of his hands during today's opening-round mechanical failure which included a ruptured fuel line and subsequent cockpit fire. "I feel so blessed to be in this moment right now. This is a big, huge moment. Don (Schumacher), I couldn't be any happier than to be on one your race teams. You have those types of teams and you are that type of person. You are a genuine and loving person and, man, he always took me as one of his own family members. Every member of his family has taken me in with open arms. I'm just glad we could bring this championship to DSR, to Matco Tools and for the U.S. Army. It feels incredible right now.

"To win a world championship with the way this competition has been this year in Top Fuel is incredible. To run and complete like we have been competing all year long is a phenomenal job by all the teams. We all switched back and forth in first and second and third, I don't know how many times. Back and forth, back and forth and back and forth. Don just kept saying, 'Just fight for it, guys.' He gave all these teams the necessary tools to make these cars go to the next level. You've got so many teams out here running strong, 12 different cars can win a race this year by just the drop of a dime. To do what we did was an amazing, amazing year."

Asked in the post-event press conference if he had a chance to speak with Schumacher, yet, Brown said, "I haven't talked to Tony yet, but he's a class act. That was a great drag race in the final. Those Army guys have nothing to hang their heads about. They gave all that they had and it just didn't turn out for them. I'm glad he shared the title chase with me this year."

With the 2012 Countdown to the Championship complete, the top-10 drivers finished as follows:

- 1. Antron Brown (2,555 points)**
- 2. Tony Schumacher (2,548 points, -7)**
3. Spencer Massey (2,505 points, -50)
4. Shawn Langdon (2,450 points, -105)
5. Brandon Bernstein (2,450 points, -105)
6. Doug Kalitta (2,341 points, -214)
7. Morgan Lucas (2,338 points, -217)
8. Bob Vandergriff (2,336 points, -219)
9. Steve Torrence (2,300 points, -255)
10. David Grubnic (2,260 points, -295)

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Contact Bill Klingbeil or Laz Denes with True Speed Communication

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

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

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