

WORSHAM, AREND, NOBILE AND HINES SCORE VICTORIES AT O'REILLY AUTO PARTS NHRA SPRING NATIONALS

BAYTOWN, Texas – Del Worsham continued his impressive start to the season by racing to the Top Fuel victory Sunday at the O'Reilly Auto Parts NHRA Spring Nationals presented by Pennzoil at Royal Purple Raceway.

Jeff Arend (Funny Car), Vincent Nobile (Pro Stock) and Andrew Hines (Pro Stock Motorcycle) also were winners of the NHRA Full Throttle Drag Racing Series event near Houston.

With the victory, longtime Funny Car racer Worsham joined Mike Dunn as the only drivers to win this event in both nitro categories. Worsham powered away from Al-Anabi Racing teammate Larry Dixon to take his third win of the season and second in a row. He covered the distance in 3.880 seconds at 318.99 mph while defending world champ Dixon finished in 3.900 at 316.82.

After a sluggish qualifying effort, Worsham and his Brian Husen-tuned dragster got in the groove on race day and powered past Bob Vandergriff, David Grubnic and Doug Kalitta before slipping past Dixon in the final. With the victory Worsham increased his series lead to 95 over Dixon.

"This is surreal," said Worsham of his 28th career victory. "The way the day unfolded, we had some close races and it was amazing. It was great to race Larry in the final because he's the champion and we're all shooting for him. The final was a heck of a race. I've got to give all the credit to the Al-Anabi team. I am just a small part of it. The cars are so evenly matched it's just a matter

of who's hot at that given second. When I saw the win light come on down there I was like this is just another unbelievable day."

Arend took the Funny Car victory when final round opponent Mike Neff fouled at the starting line in his Ford Mustang. Arend's DHL machine crossed the finish line in 4.259 at 297.68 to take his first win of the season and third of his career.

Arend, who qualified 10th, claimed early round wins over Paul Lee, Tim Wilkerson and Bob Bode with his quickest winning time in the three rounds a 4.307. Meanwhile Neff had reeled off a string of low four teens to make the final. Arend was surprised to hear Neff hit the throttle twice in the opposite lane in the final and eventually leave before the tree turned green.

"We knew we needed a little bit of help against Mike because he was strong all weekend," Arend said. "It was a long light and I kinda heard him go burp-burp, and I was going down the track thinking I should shut it off, but it was too much fun. You never know what is going to happen in drag racing and sometimes it surprises you. To get this win and dedicate it to Scott (Kalitta) that was huge."

With the runner-up finish, Neff moved back into the series lead, 18 in front of teammate Robert Hight.

Rookie driver Vincent Nobile used a near-perfect reaction time of .007 of a second to earn his first Pro Stock victory. Nobile, 19, became the youngest driver to win in the history of NHRA's 41-year-old factory

hot rod category when his Mountain View Dodge Avenger finished in 6.625 at 209.72 to edge local favorite Rodger Brogdon of nearby Tomball, who posted a quicker but losing 6.624 at 208.78 in his Racers Edge Pontiac GXP.

"It was close, I didn't even know who won at the stripe," said Nobile, who also defeated Kurt Johnson, Jason Line and Greg Stanfield to advance to his third final round appearance. "Then everyone was screaming in my ear that we won. It was incredible. It's crazy how competitive Pro Stock is. Every driver is great out here. There are no easy rounds. I race with a bunch of great people. We are definitely living on a high right now."

Line regained the points lead in the 200 mph category with his quarterfinal finish and now holds a one point lead over Stanfield.

In Pro Stock Motorcycle, Hines claimed his first win of the season and 24th of his career by holding off Michael Phillips in the final round. Hines rode his Screamin' Eagle Vance & Hines Harley-Davidson to a 6.900 at 195.14 while Phillips trailed with a 6.946 at 195.25 on his Racers Edge Suzuki.

Hines defeated Chip Ellis, Jerry Savoie and Karen Stoffer to advance to the final round and successfully defend his win here from a year ago.

"To come to Houston, a track that was our nemesis for 20 years, and get two wins in a row is pretty special," Hines said. "These pewter Wallys are really cool. Eddie (Krawiec, teammate) won his at Gainesville and I told him I didn't



Del Worsham

want to touch it until I got one of my own. I didn't expect to win mine this fast, but I am glad to get it. My brother Matt (Hines, crew chief) gave me a great motorcycle all weekend long and it was consistent and going perfectly straight down the track."

Krawiec kept the points lead in the two-wheel class with his semifinal finish, and sits 18 ahead of Hines.

The NHRA Full Throttle Drag Racing Series continues May 13-15 with the Summit Racing Equipment NHRA Southern Nationals at Atlanta Dragway.

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