

**GEICO's Lucas beats teammate for Winternationals title, assumes points lead**



POMONA, Calif. (Feb. 27) -- Across town in Hollywood they're handing out shiny gold Oscars but GEICO-sponsored drag racer Morgan Lucas wouldn't trade his new pewter Wally for anything.

Lucas beat teammate and childhood friend Shawn Langdon in a thrilling Top Fuel final Sunday evening to claim his fourth professional title. The victory at the 51st annual season-opening Kragen O'Reilly NHRA Winternationals at the Pomona Fairgrounds also put the 27-year-old in the points lead for the first time in his career.

"This is crazy," Lucas said. "Me and Shawn went to high school 20 minutes from here and the corporate offices of Lucas Oil are just around the corner in Corona. This is just a dream come true.

"What a day for this team. We've been waiting for this since 2007. We worked hard to get to this point and it's special. Our guys helped the Lucas team today and they helped us out before the final. That's how we do it. We all share in this win."

Although they now reside in Brownsburg, Ind., Lucas and Langdon grew up in nearby Mira Loma and dreamed of racing each other while attending Jurupa Valley High School. After advancing through a star-studded 16-car field, they finally got their first chance to race heads-up with a trophy on the line with Langdon getting an early jump (.027-second reaction time to Lucas' .045-second start) only to slip into a fight for control of his 8,000-horsepower machine long enough to allow Lucas by for the win.

The final numbers showed Lucas posting a 3.835-second pass at 316.48 mph in his GEICO/Lucas Oil dragster to Langdon's game but losing 4.047 at 313.73 mph in the Lucas Oil/Speedco dragster. This was the fourth time the two men have raced each other in eliminations with Lucas now a perfect 4-0 against Langdon.

"My congratulations to Morgan," said Langdon, a two-time Super Comp world champion. "We're No. 2 in the points and if you're gonna lose a race it might as well be to your teammate. This was the first time ever we had both (team) cars in the final so everyone is happy. Hopefully, we'll just progress from here.

"This is what we grew up dreaming about but of course we wanted the win over here. It's cool that we won as a team but we're still searching for our first (pro) win on the Lucas Oil team so it hurts a little. Blame it on me. I pedaled the car in the final and it looks as though I probably didn't need to. I'm still learning."

Lucas was quick to pick his teammate up and admits he wouldn't have been surprised at all if Langdon had won.

"We're great friends and I hate that he didn't get his first win today because I love the guy and I know how much he wants it," Lucas said. "But let me tell you something, he's gonna win a bunch of these things. He's already got two gold Wallys (signifying series championships) and he's one of the most talented drivers I've ever met in my life. He's going to dominate for many years, trust me."

For now, the spotlight's on Lucas, who rode crew chief Dickie Venables tune-up past Brandon Bernstein, Terry McMillen, Del Worsham, and Langdon on the day.

"This is so special to me because Pomona is one of the big-time races," Lucas said. "Here, Gainesville (Fla.), Indy, and selfishly the Lucas Oil race in Brainerd (Minn.), those are the races you want to win. Today we had a lot of luck come our way but we ended up with the trophy and that's what counts.

"Someone on this race team has a horseshoe and it might be Dickie. Since he's been here the luck has been coming our way and the confidence among the guys is up. He's making me want to become a better driver. The guy has two world championships in Funny Car and I hope he gets one soon in Top Fuel. I don't want to dream too big but we feel real good right now."

The NHRA series takes a weekend off before heading to central Florida for the Tire Kingdom Gatornationals, March 11-13, at Gainesville Raceway.

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