

### JOHN FORCE RECAPS THE 2017 SEASON

John Force, the 148-time Funny Car winner, wrapped up the 2017 season in seventh place in the NHRA Mello Yello point standings with a No. 1 qualifier and a win at the Gatornationals. The winningest driver in NHRA history's season was highlighted with two more NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series world championships as a team owner. Daughter Brittany Force earned her first Top Fuel world championship and son-in-law Robert Hight took home his second Funny Car world championship crown. John Force took some time to reflect on the 2017 season and talk about what's coming in 2018.

**Q: Could you be any happier as a team owner?**

No, because we told Chevrolet, Jim Campbell, that John Force Racing had won all those championships for all those years and that we could turn it around again. We need to get back financially and get our people back and we made that happen. No, I'm tickled pink to be a champion, as part of this championship team with Robert winning and with my daughter Brittany. It's amazing what took place.

**Q: You're still winning races, still contending for championships, how do you stay motivated?**

I lived for racing, I'm still living it. It's all I know. Everyone, our crew guys and all, went on vacation after the Finals. Robert and I went back to work. I love it. I love racing and now I get to be with my kids and do it and my granddaughter, well she's driving junior dragsters.

**Q: How proud are you of Robert and Brittany winning the championships?**

We've got a great sponsor with Auto Club with Robert. They're unbelievable how they've supported us, 16 years. They're the longest running sponsor of John Force Racing. Robert won them a championship but we struggled for a lot of years. I'm really proud of him, couldn't be any prouder. He's a great diver, great on the Christmas Tree, great saving the car, especially on that last qualifying run at the Finals. You can't be more proud of an individual that lives it everyday and is deserving of it.

Brittany with that great sponsor in Monster Energy, well she struggled all year with that gut ache. She worried that, you know, it's the great Alan Johnson and it's Brian Husen and it's one of the greatest teams. I told her, yeah, but you gotta learn. Champions are not born, champions are made. And that gut ache is either gonna put



you out of business or turn you into a winner. And that's where you gotta go. You gotta make it turn you into a winner.

We did hire a trainer, Scott Garwood. He and his team worked with her for five races starting in Denver, Sonoma, Seattle, Brainerd and Indy. Then he said he was going into the Countdown. If you're a driver or a crew chief or corporate America, you need to look at this guy. I don't know all what he did but it sure helped turn her around. Alan Johnson worked with her too. Alan Johnson is probably one of the best teachers I've ever met and I don't even know him. I'm proud of her to tears. And she's done something that no woman has done since Shirley Muldowney 35 years ago.

**Q: Can you talk about the success of your partnership with Peak and how it has helped the whole organization?**

I lost two major partners. It hurt us financially. Peak was already with our car and they stepped up and bought a half a season and they wanted to see where it would go, if I could grow their business because no ones done more store chain displays or conventions than me. I've lived the auto parts business across America. Peak is how we met Advance Auto Parts and they ended up with Courtney.

I've been really lucky. Peak is very aggressive, Old World Industries, have tons of brands. They know I understand that business, how to sell to the store chains and they know I know how to promote them and be there.

**Q: You are two away from 150 career wins. Did you ever think you would approach that kind of record?**

First off, I'll get there. People wanted me to go after 250 like Richard Petty. You know I won championships in AHRA, ADRA. I've won tons of

races, if you counted them up, not match races but actual national events, I've probably already made 250. People say 'Why don't you print it?' Because I never raced Petty and I don't want to catch him. He is a hero to me. Just like Prudhomme, I'm still chasing Prudhomme.

**Q: Talk about your celebration after John Force Racing swept the championships in the nitro categories...**

It was very emotional. Robert had just won a championship, Brittany had just won a championship. I was on straight nitro. I was on straight adrenaline. I couldn't believe it. I wanted to do a burnout to the lights. I had always dreamed of doing those big ol' smoky burnouts. I know that's what the fans love and it helps sell t-shirts over at Maingate. I gave it a pretty good one and got after it pretty good. I got kind of a wake up call out there, hell I thought it was almost going to die on me but that baby stayed lit. Then I realized it's time to get my focus, I had a race to win for Peak. I wasn't able to get the job done. But at the end of the day John Force Racing ended up with 20 championships. Pretty dang good day.

**Q: Any final thoughts?**

I just wanted to drive Funny Cars, I'll probably never go to dragster because it's just, if you're gonna go you need to go because you can win and you need years to learn it. Bernstein won Prudhomme won but they came from dragsters to Funny Cars and went back. I drove a front engine dragster in my early days but never did anything in it. Never did anything in fuel altered but crash. What I'm saying is now, this is where I'm gonna ride it out. I'm a champ and I'll always be the champ and now my daughter is a champ.

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