

Hi, I'm Doug Lewis with Ford Performance Specialists Inc., in Mableton GA (near Six Flags). I've been a Drag Racing fan for most of my life. I love the sport for several reasons. I like the access to the drivers and the crew (every ticket is a pit pass), I like the sensory overload of the cars running down the strip at full chat. But most of all, I like the physics involved in making an 1800lb dragster accelerate from zero to 330mph in less than 4 seconds. These are the fastest accelerating vehicles on the planet.

Fifty years ago, the National Hot Rod Association was created. Formed by Wally Park, it gave hot rodders and racers of all types a place to come together and

compete against one another in classes with uniform rules all across the country. This gave racers a way to create race cars and run them in a safe consistent environment. It took street racing to a whole new level. As the racers innovated and created new ways to cobble together engines and chassis to get down the track faster and quicker, the NHRA kept every one together and pointed in the same direction.

Fast forward to the 70's when the NHRA had clear defined classes and at the top was Top Fuel Dragster, Top Fuel Funny Car and Pro Stock Car. There was a series of races held across the country at various tracks each year. The racers in each class would travel to these track and



FULL HOUSE FOR THE GATORNATIONALS

race each other to see who was the quickest and the fastest. At the end of the year, the winner in each class was crowned.

Each year, the series started and ended in Pomona CA. There are tracks on the west coast, out in the west, the heartland, the north east and in the south. This presented the racers and tuners with very different racing conditions, track conditions and weather.

One of the premier tracks comes early in the season in Gainesville FL, the Gatornationals. Gainesville Raceway is in the middle of forest land, that's very close to sea level and has exceptional air quality in early spring. This lets the tuners make more power to get their cars down

the track quicker and faster. Gainesville is where track records are set. In the 80's, Don Garlits, Don Prudhomme, Shirley Muldowney, Connie Kalitta and lots of others were attacking the track and knocking down records. In 1992 Kenny Bernstein finally got the Big One. He ran 301.70 with an ET of 4.82. A year later, the Funny Cars would eclipse the 300mph barrier.

Today, the racing has changed somewhat in the name of safety. The cars only run 1000' instead of a quarter mile (1320'), but now they are going faster in that 1000' than they ever did with 300' more track. To accomplish this, the engines make upwards of 10,000hp.

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