

## GATORNATIONALS: CONT. FROM PAGE 9

That's just an incredible number to think about. One Top Fuel Dragster engine makes more horse power than the first 7 rows of the Daytona 500. Two cars at the starting line of the Gatornationals makes more horse power than the entire starting field. There are so many factoids about these cars that are just fascinating. Fuel consumption, for example.

To start the car up, do a burn out, back the car up and then make a 1000" pass to 330mph, takes 17 gallons of fuel. The exhaust from the engine is pointed up for a reason. Not only is it cool to see 12' flames in the nighttime qualifying runs, it actually provides downforce and helps plant the rear tires shoving them into the track surface helping the car accelerate. Just the exhaust coming out of the pipes adds 2000lbs of downforce. The wing at the back of the car can generate 8000lbs of downforce at 300mph.

All of this downforce is used to help the monster Goodyear slicks grip the track and accelerate the car. When the driver hits the throttle, the acceleration forces are brutal. The driver experiences about 5G's of acceleration. That's like sitting in your car at a traffic light and getting rammed in the back by a semi truck doing 70mph.

Once the car gets going, the G forces drop a mere 2 1/2 at the finish line. When the driver pulls the shutes, he experiences negative 5G's as the shutes deploy which throws him against the belts.

Consider a new Ford GT Supercar. We could have a 10-mile long perfectly straight 2-lane road. At the far end, we put the Ford GT in one lane. In the other lane and at the 9-mile mark, we put a dragster sitting ready and waiting. We give the Ford GT an 8-mile head start to get up to full speed. The dragster doesn't start until the GT passes it at 200mph. At that moment, the dragster hits the throttle. The Ford GT would be ahead of the dragster until about 1000' where the dragster would blow by the Ford like it was standing still, and most likely blow it off the road because of the concussion and shock wave produced by the dragster at 300mph.

So for 50 years Gainesville Raceway has been the place where crewchiefs, crew and drivers have been able to put all these factors together and give the fans a real show. This is the place where records fall and then fall again. It's been the place where legends come to race.

This year is the 50th running of the Gatornationals and to honor those legends in the sport, the Gatornationals held "Unfin-



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ished Business," a separate event where this elite group would race each other in a bracket elimination to crown a winner.

The list included Top Fuel Champions, Don Garlits, Shirley Muldowney, Kenny Bernstein, Joe Amoto and Don Prudhomme, Top Fuel Funny Car Champion Ed McCullough, Pro Stock Champion Warren Johnson and Pro Stock Bike Crew Chief and Champion Terry Hines.

These eight Legends of the sport drove brand new identical Toyota Camrys in

elimination rounds. Muldowney defeated Garlits in the first round and Warren Johnson, "The Professor," wins the final against Ed "The Ace" McCullough. What a great tribute to drag racing's all time greatest drivers in the history of the sport.

For the Top Fuel Dragsters, this year had no shortage of excitement. It just proves again that the tuning window for these cars is so small to get it right. Too much power and the car strikes the tires and goes up in smoke. Not enough

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