

# **PERMATEX/FOLLOW A DREAM TA/FC TEAM FINISHES RUNNER-UP AT MAPLE GROVE**

MARSTONS MILLS, MA (May 30, 2017) - The Permatex/ Follow A Dream Top Alcohol Funny Car team bounced back from several qualifying issues to finish runner-up in this past weekend's Showdown at Sundown.

The event, held at Maple Grove Raceway in Mohnton, Pennsylvania, was a NHRA Lucas Oil Drag Racing Series Northeast Division meet. The Follow A Dream team struggled during its three qualifying runs, according to team owner Jay Blake.

"Qualifying was horrible and the eliminations went well," Blake said. "The first qualifying pass the car was bouncing a bunch and actually shot Phil (driver Phil Burkart) into the left lane, right in front of Dan Pomponio, who we were qualifying against. There was no contact, but that was pretty scary.

"Then, in the second qualifying pass, it bounced again but not as bad. It shook and wasn't acting right. So we put a brand new set of Goodyear's (tires) on the back and then Saturday morning, in our third qualifying lap, we had an ignition problem after we started the car, so we had to abort that run.

"Friday night during qualifying, in the second half of the track, the car went over 11,000 rpm. We broke a connecting rod bolt during the service after that run, so we rebuilt the whole motor, went through the transmission and put a new rear end in the car before that third qualifying run when we had the ignition problem.

"But we knew it was fresh for the first round (of eliminations), Anthony (tuner Anthony Terenzio) did a great job coming up with a nice tune-up for it, the team did a great job, we won first round and then we won the second round."

Starting from the sixth qualifying spot, Burkart defeated Dan Pomponio in the first round of eliminations and D.J. Cox in the semifinals.

In the final round of eliminations, No. 1 qualifier Sean Bellemeur got the better of Burkart and took home the win. But it was close: Bellemeur covered the quarter mile in 5.470 seconds at 267.91 mph, while Burkart clocked a run of 5.553 seconds at 267.06 mph.

"Everything turned around for us after qualifying," Blake said. "We were ready, but we just weren't quick enough for the finals.

"The team never gave up, just kept working harder to make it right and Anthony kept working on the tune-up. We never gave up and great things happened."

Burkart is now ranked No. 1 in the Lucas Oil Drag Racing Series East Region standings and is ninth in the NHRA Top Alcohol Funny Car national standings.

Maple Grove holds a special place in Blake's heart. "It was at Maple Grove in 1998 that I decided to start Follow A Dream right around the anniversary of my accident (an industrial accident that took Blake's sight a year earlier)," he said. "There's a lot of personal things that go into that race.

"I think of it every single time I go there. It's the biggest race in the world. The May race is right around the anniversary of my accident, and the national event (in mid-September) is the race that I decided that I was going to do this and form Follow A Dream. Both races, those are the most sentimental races in the world to me, and some day I will win them."

Blake dedicated this past weekend's race to the memory of Follow A Dream crew member Kyle Cummings' grandmother, who passed away last Wednesday as the team hit the road headed to Maple Grove.

The weekend was also important for the team because it was also the Memorial Day Weekend. Blake had the Follow A Dream show car on display at a 24-hour tribute to military veterans in Hyannis, Massachusetts.

This Saturday at Raynham Dog Track in Raynham, Mass., the Follow A Dream race car and trailer will appear at an annual truck and car show that benefits the Shriners Hospitals.

After that, the team will race on three consecutive weekends, including two national events.

First will be the NHRA Summit Racing Equipment Nationals, June 22-25, at Summit Racing Equipment Motorsports Park in Norwalk, Ohio.

The following weekend, June 30 and July 1, will be a Lucas Oil Drag Racing Series regional event at Lebanon Valley Speedway in West Lebanon, New York.

Then the Follow A Dream team travels to suburban Chicago for the Route 66 Nationals, July 6-9. Not only is it a national event, it also will include the Jegs All-Stars Race, which the Follow A Dream team will participate in.

"We're going to all those places and we're going to win," Blake said. "We've got all the pieces, have the right team, the right driver, everything we need to win."