

Permatex/Follow A Dream TA/FC team bid has mixed weekend at Route 66 Nationals



MARSTONS MILLS, MA (July 11, 2017) - Permatex/The Follow A Dream Top Alcohol Funny Car had a mixed result this past weekend at the Route 66 NHRA Nationals at Route 66 Raceway in Joliet, Illinois. On the plus side, the team wound up with a good semi-final finish in the annual Jegs Sportsman's All-Star Race, a race within a race that took place this past Saturday at Route 66.

But the Follow A Dream team also had to swallow some bittersweet elements.

First, it suffered engine failure during the second of last Friday's two qualifying runs. That prompted the team to replace it with a new motor, and then wound up able to only reach the quarterfinals in Sunday's finals.

"The overall weekend was very busy, but the crew never gave up and did a great job," team owner Jay Blake said. "We hurt a motor on Friday and replaced that motor.

"We were up to about 1 or 1:30 a.m. swapping the motor and all that. Then, we went into the All-Star Race confident, got into the semis, which was good.

"The car just keeps fighting with us. We found some things on Friday and some things on Saturday and tried some things on Sunday. We're making progress with it, so it's good. We've hopefully rounded the corner. Every round, you learn something. It looks like we've solved a few issues."

Even though he would have liked to take home a winner's trophy at Route 66, Blake said he believes his team is moving closer and closer to a win or maybe more than one in the coming races.

"We learned a bunch this weekend and we will use that moving forward," Blake said. "Even though we would have liked some better results, the weekend was definitely beneficial for us."

The team's next event will be a Lucas Oil Divisional Championship Series event, July 20-23, at New England Dragway in Epping, N.H.

"All races matter, the way our point structure is," Blake said. "New England Dragway is a national event facility and they do a great job for the regional race.

"I'm confident we'll have a great surface, they'll draw a good crowd and it'll be a good weekend."

There's a bit more incentive for Blake and the Follow A Dream team, as it's essentially a home race for the team, which is based out of Marston Mills, Massachusetts, about a two-hour drive south of the Dragway. With quarterfinal and semifinal finishes in most of this season's races, Blake is hoping that some home cooking may lead to a win at New England.

"It's a race we've never won, it's our home track and it would be awesome to win," Blake said.

The team still has a number of goals to reach this season - and Blake believes they are all attainable. First are several more wins. Second, is to win the Lucas Oil Drag Racing Series Division 1 championship. Third, is to have driver Phil Burkart finish in the top-10 in the Lucas Oil Drag Racing Series Top Alcohol Funny Car standings. Burkart left Route 66 this past weekend ranked sixth in the LODRS TA/FC driver rankings.

"Absolutely, those are all still doable," Blake said. "One of the biggest thing is to win a race.

"It would mean a lot because it would show all the effort we've been putting in and it would be payback for all that effort. It's why we do this: we do this to win.

"We know we can win, we have the right sponsors, the right team, the right people - we have all the right pieces. And when you get a win, it's a great shot in the arm for the team.

"It's a busy August and September. It'd be nice. We'll get a win or two in there, I believe we certainly can do that."