

## Permatex/Follow A Dream TA/FC team ends up just a split-second away from victory at Maple Grove



**MARSTONS MILLS, Massachusetts (September 26, 2017)** - The Permatex/Follow A Dream Top Alcohol Funny Car team ended its season on a high note, finishing runner-up in this past weekend's Dodge NHRA Nationals at Maple Grove Raceway in Mohnton, Pennsylvania.

Driver Phil Burkart qualified No. 1 and recorded the lowest elapsed time of the race in the TA/FC ranks, but just barely fell in the final round (5.571 seconds at 264.34 mph) to California's Sean Bellemeur (5.573 seconds at 265.59 mph).

Despite not getting the winner's trophy, team owner Jay Blake was still quite pleased with the overall weekend effort.

"We were No. 1 qualifier, ran low elapsed time of the weekend, we were the car to beat - unfortunately, we got beat," Blake said. "The crew just did such an awesome job. It was a ton of greatness.

"We lost by .002 of a second. It was that close. Phil never, ever saw him (Bellemeur). It was really, really close."

Also of note, Burkart wound up winning the Lucas Oil Drag Racing Series East Region championship by a commanding margin over DJ Cox Jr., and is ranked fourth in the LODRS national event standings.

To reach the final round was extremely gratifying for Blake not only as a team owner, but on an even higher personal level.

It was 19 years ago while sitting in the grandstands at Maple Grove that Blake, who had lost his sight a year earlier in a tragic industrial accident, got the inspiration to decide and follow his own dream.

That was the seed that took root to become the hugely successful Follow A Dream race team and its inspirational motivational program.

To come closer than his team ever has in 18 years of racing at Maple Grove was satisfying on one hand, but losing after coming so close to winning left somewhat of a bittersweet taste in Blake's mouth - and shows just how competitive he is.

It's all about the trophy, and we missed it," Blake said. "Yes, it was cool and it was great to be No. 1 qualifier and to run well and it was all great, but the goal of the whole thing is to win, and we didn't.

"Still, it was very gratifying because of all the work we've done all year, the car was showing we're going in the right direction."

"We're very blessed to do what we do and very lucky to have the opportunities we have. Blake said. "The dream is to win that race at Maple Grove and one day we're going to do it."

While Maple Grove was the final race on the FAD schedule for 2017, Blake is holding out hope that he may be able to add one last-minute schedule addition: to go out to the season-ending NHRA Finals in Pomona, California, in November.

"We definitely would love to go to Pomona, but we have to find some additional sponsorship," Blake said. "We always enjoy going to Pomona.

"We've won there, we've run the spectrum out there. We'd love to go back there. If there's any potential sponsors that would like to help us, we'd love to hear from them."