

Permatex/Follow A Dream TA/FC team finishes runner-up in divisional race at Lebanon Valley, New York

MARSTONS MILLS, Massachusetts (July 3, 2018)

The Permatex/Follow A Dream Top Alcohol Funny Car team went into a one-month break with momentum and confidence, finishing runner-up in this past weekend's NHRA Lucas Oil Racing Drag Racing Series, Northeast Division, at Lebanon Valley Dragway in West Lebanon, New York.

Driver Phil Burkart was the No. 1 qualifier for the event with a strong run of 5.589 seconds at 263.45 mph.

Burkart made it past the first two rounds of eliminations before smoking the tires in the final round, falling to Dan Pomponio.

There was one other bit of misfortune during the weekend for Jay Blake's Follow A Dream squad when the engine broke during the first round of eliminations, a solo pass for Burkart.

"The first round, we had a bye run and the car was on a great pass," Blake said. "At the top of second gear, it broke an ignition rotor and threw the rods out of it."

"So, we came back to the pits and we really thrashed. Phil's father-in-law was there, who is very experienced and raced with Phil for years, and there were some other friends that were there, with their help along with everybody on the team, we did amazingly."

It was the second motor malfunction that the team suffered in the last three races.

“It’s incredibly frustrating and incredibly expensive,” Blake said. “It was 100 degrees and humid and we’re doing a motor swap.”

“The pros have bigger budgets and are more set up to do it, but we got it done. We got the motors swapped and we did everything we had to do and dragged it up to the starting line for the semifinals.”

Unfortunately, eliminations that were scheduled to be completed Saturday, June 30, were postponed to Sunday, July 1, after DJ Cox had a horrific crash during a semi-final round. Because repairs to the track took several hours, track officials postponed the rest of the event to the following day.

Fortunately, Cox – a good friend of the Permatex/Follow A Dream team – was only bruised from the wreck.

“We were in the lanes, the next pair to go, and DJ Cox had a horrible crash in front of us,” Blake said. “He’s going to be okay, but it was terrifying.”

“We did not want to run after that. It was the best thing to do to turn around and come back the next day.”

When racing resumed Sunday morning, Burkart cruised to a semifinal win before losing to Pomponio in the final round.

“We were very happy we qualified No. 1, we were very happy we made the finals, but we’re disappointed we didn’t win,” Blake said. “The race car is back, it’s performing, the team is working well and we just have to continue massaging it and adapting to track conditions.”

Burkart is now ranked third in the Lucas Oil Drag Racing Series East Region standings and fifth in the NHRA national standings.

“The car and the team are at the point where we know we can

compete for the championship and there's still plenty of time to do that," Blake said. "It would be very satisfying to do that, especially given the rough start we had this season."

The Permatex/Follow A Dream team is now off until its next race, the Atco Regionals, August 3-5, at Atco (New Jersey) Dragway.

"We have lots of carnage to repair and we have to get ready for the last half of the season," Blake said. "It's all time. We have the knowledge and parts and everything to do it and having a month off gives us plenty of time to get it all done before our next race."

In between all of the work back at the shop, Blake will also be hosting a display at the Syracuse (New York) Nationals July 20-22.

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