

Follow A Dream/Permatex TA/FC team suffers mechanical malfunction that leads to disappointing early exit at NHRA Southern Nationals

Follow A Dream – Atlanta Southern Nationals race wrap-up – Wednesday, May 9, 2018

MARSTONS MILLS, Massachusetts (May 9, 2018) – As the old saying goes, if it wasn't for bad luck, the Follow A Dream/Permatex Top Alcohol Funny Car team would have no luck at all.

The Jay Blake-owned team came into this past weekend's NHRA Southern Nationals at Atlanta Dragway in Commerce, Georgia, with high hopes after a season start that has been nothing short of a constant sense of frustration.

With his team not having raced at Atlanta Dragway for nearly a decade, Blake felt driver Phil Burkart and tuner Anthony Terenzio had a fresh canvas and would hit on the right combination to get things headed in the right direction.

Unfortunately, a freak mechanical malfunction at the starting line in the first round of eliminations ended the Follow A Dream team's day before it ever had a chance to get going.

"We struggled in qualifying and we found some clutch linkage issues, and we made some changes for the first round of eliminations that we kind of felt confident about," Blake said. "We did the burnout in the first round of eliminations and due to all the shaking the car went through this weekend, an electrical plug loosened up and it lost battery voltage to the electronics that help run the motor – and the car shut off."

"Literally, the plug just disconnected from the battery and our day was done. There was no fixing it at the starting line."

Blake is known for his always-positive outlook on life, but things

this season have admittedly been rough.

“Man, It’s been a disaster,” Blake said, adding a chuckle to try and mitigate some of the frustration with a sense of much-needed humor.

‘But the truth is clear,’ Blake added, saying, “We’re still chasing problems. It’s very frustrating.”

The team now has two weeks off before its next race, a Lucas Oil Drag Racing Series regional event at Maple Grove Raceway, May 25-27, followed by the team’s next national event, May 31-June 3, at Route 66 Raceway in suburban Chicago.

“We’re going to test the Thursday before our next race at Maple Grove,” Blake said. “Before that, everybody needs a good break.” “It’s so difficult because three races in a row, we’ve gone into them confident. And three races in a row, we’ve just had struggles every run.”

“It’s very difficult on the crew. Everybody volunteers to do this. It just beats everybody up very, very much.”

At the same time, the team has never given up or lost its spirit. But this is one of the more difficult periods the Blake squad has gone through in the last several years.

“We’ve had frustration and difficult times in the past, but in the last few years, we’ve never had a struggle like this,” Blake said.

“Maybe we’re trying too hard. You get to a point and you just try whatever you can try.”

“And at times, you may try too hard.”

Maple Grove Raceway has long been a significant and successful track for Blake ever since he formed the Follow A Dream team nearly 20 years ago.

That’s why Blake feels confident that if there ever was a perfect

place to break the team's run of bad luck this season, it's at Maple Grove, and then potentially double-up with additional success during the Jegs TA/FC All-Star Race as part of the following week's event at Route 66 Raceway.

"I feel confident in the team," Blake said. "And I'm confident we will get this figured out, and I feel testing at Maple Grove, we're going to go in with the right frame of mind and we'll have the time to work on things and I think it will be good."

Blake hopes to send the FAD TA/FC Chevrolet Camaro down-track four times during that one-day test session at Maple Grove prior to the race weekend.

But before that, Blake will be working daily back at his Massachusetts-based shop.

"We're going to work on everything to try and figure this thing out and get back on the right track," Blake said.

Blake will also have several speaking engagements during the two weeks away from the racetrack, including at Universal Technical Institute in Norwood, Mass., the Carroll Center for the Blind in Newton, Mass., and will also make an appearance at a local car show.

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