



Gatornationals Notebook: Speed records fall

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By [Don Coble](#)

GAINESVILLE — Before Friday, a Pro Stock racer had never been clocked at 213 mph at the finish line of the 1,000-foot race.

Now there have been five.

Track conditions at Gainesville Raceway and cool weather were a perfect combination for speed records during the first two rounds of qualifying for the Tire Kingdom Gatornationals.

Three national records and six track records were broken in the four professional classes, but none more impressive than in Pro Stock.

Five cars beat the speed record, and top-qualifier Rodger Brogdon set the mark for fastest time at 6.496 seconds. Erica Enders was going 213.57 mph at the finish line to reset the record for speed.

“That was the most-perfect run I’ve ever made in a car,” Brogdon said. “It was so smooth I could have taken my hands off the steering wheel.”

Brogdon used two year-old notes to find a setup for the conditions. Some struggled with the amount of grip in the asphalt, and others found ways to keep the tires from shaking at the launch.

“You’ll see guys get off the track and immediately start tearing things apart and thinking of new ideas to go faster,” Brogdon said. “Us, we might go eat some boudan first. We take things a little easier in the South.”

Brogdon is from a Houston suburb.

“When you’re from the South, you do things a little different,” he said. “We’re not as serious about things. We’re here to have fun, and running 213 is a lot of fun.”

Crossover star power

NASCAR's Kurt Busch and Mike Helton had the weekend off, but they couldn't stay away from the racetrack. The same went for IndyCar Series driver Graham Rahal.

All were at the Gainesville Raceway on Friday for the first two rounds of qualifying for the Gatornationals.

Busch was making his professional drag racing debut in the Pro Stock class, and Helton, the NASCAR president, spent the afternoon touring the massive facility.

Rahal was making an appearance for his IndyCar sponsor, but he came away with a different respect.

"I've never had the desire to do it in the past, but I think it would be cool now," Rahal said. "I wouldn't want to do it full-time, but I think I'd like to try it. I'll try anything."

Busch proved it's not as easy as it looked, failing to get off the line in both of his Friday passes. He will have two more opportunities to lock in a top-16 qualifying times to advance to Sunday's eliminations.

Garlits wins match race

"Big Daddy" Don Garlits has four Top Fuel wins at the Gatornationals. On Friday, he added an electric car victory over Darrell Gwynn.

The two staged a match race to raise money for Gwynn's foundation that supports treatment for spinal cord injuries.

Gwynn's final NHRA victory came at the Gatornationals in 1991. A few weeks later, he was paralyzed in an exhibition race in England.

The electric dragsters weren't fast. In fact, Garlits took more than a half-minute to complete the 1,000-foot run.