

# DIFFERENT

## The Fall Fling 500K Was A Different Kind Of Race

WORDS/PHOTOS JOHN DiBARTOLOMEO



**T**here appears to be a lot of high dollar bracket racing around. This one was different.

First of all, it paid \$500,000 to the winner of the main event held on Friday. Sure, there was a race earlier in the year which paid more, but this event was a one-time ten year celebration of what has become one of the premier races in the country, the gold standard of high dollar bracket racing.

Second of all, due in part to the amount of pre-entries and how fast they sold out, they chose to limit the field to no double-entries. It was a single car, single driver event which may have harkened back to the days of the old Moroso 5-Day Bracket Championships. Save for a

buyback round, it was truly, two go down and one comes back.

At some events, the entries total up to sometimes well over 400 cars, which because of double-entries might only mean far less in actual car count. Doesn't really mean much, as an entry fee is paid for each, but here, when the field was limited to 385 cars, there were exactly 385 cars!

We're sure you've heard the story before but it's worth reminding; ten years ago, championship racers and long-time friends Peter Biondo and Kyle Seipel dreamed about promoting a race which they themselves would like to race at. That first year the pair lost their shirts,

heavily in debt, wondering whether they would ever do it again. But with the support of so many, they chose to go on.

Now ten years later, the Fling brand of events has grown to three races a year and one which it appears every bracket racer wants to have a Fling win on their resume. We state this because for the second year in a row, the pair decided to limit the amount of entries to their east coast races so as to not have to race until all hours of the night and even into the early hours of the following day. And in each case, the pre-entries were sold out in a matter of minutes, which speaks volumes for the power of the brand.

Their motto has been "Race It. Experience It," and to that end, knowing full well that only a certain few can win, they wanted all who attend to have the greatest experience possible. In addition to the actual race purse, over \$60,000 in random prizes and awards are given away. The beauty of those is that in most cases, these are not just gift certificates requiring someone to have to call the company in order to get the product. No, these are the actual products.

So who were the big winners? Everyone that attended. But as for the really big winner though, Hunter Patton turned on the win light in the final round Friday night for \$500,000. Although it really got turned on for him when



## FALL FLING



Hunter Patton from Texas received his baptism of Miller Lite (and others) after his win in Friday's ATI-sponsored main event for \$500,000.

BELOW: Tim Thomas was the first to break through for a Fling win on Wednesday's FST-sponsored \$30K race.



RIGHT: In Thursday's Hanson-sponsored \$30K race, Peeps Pennington knocked off Steve Law to add another Fling trophy to his collection, which also includes his Spring Fling Million win this past April.



Matt Dadas went red in the final. Once Patton saw that, no sense going down the track, he stopped mid-track and backed right up to the starting line to begin the celebration.

"It was just unreal," he said weeks after the win. "I don't even know what to say. The car ran well and I was on the 'Tree all day except for the final two rounds. In the semifinals, I had the bye run and the 'Tree seemed long. I was 0.057 but that didn't bother me. Then in the final, I flat missed it and was 0.045, so I guess I was lucky he went red."

There's always the talk about "life-changing money," and in Patton's case, the purchase of a new truck and trailer is enough to change the life of the 24-year old racer from Texas.

And then we had the runner-up. Earlier in the year, Matt Dadas put Gage Burch behind the wheel of his pick-up truck at a \$525,000-to-win event in Michigan. There Burch turned on the win light for the team. With Matt driving himself at the Fling behind the wheel of his Pontiac Starfire, the Dadas team was making it's second \$500K plus final round appearance of the year.

"This race was a little bit different," said Dadas. "I had told Gage that he sort of seasoned us for this type of race with his win earlier in the year. But this one was... different."

With each day's eliminations streamed

## FALL FLING



Funny Car shoe Shawn Langdon grew up bracket racing; successfully we might add; and he hasn't lost his step since racing at over 300mph. Langdon runner-upped to Tim Thomas in Wednesday's race.



Driving what was once a Super Stocker, Matt Dadas has had quite a year. Several wins locally along with a car owner role earlier in the year at another \$525,000 race, Dadas used those experiences to make it to the final in Friday's main event.



It might not have been Fox's FS1, but each of the quarterfinal participants in Friday's main event received some MotorManiaTV coverage in being interviewed by the Fling's Jared Pennington.



Fling promoters Peter Biondo and Kyle Seipel; with Seipel making a rare appearance behind the mic; joined to call the action during some of the rounds. These two friends have built the Fling brand to be the premier bracket race in the country.

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FALL FLING



A Fling tradition has always been to feed all on Friday night at the Impact Racer Appreciation Party.

Part of the ten-year celebration was the invitation to any Fling winner to race for a special Ivey Hutto-custom built Fling golf cart. Kevin Thorp beat a loaded field to be named King of the Fling.



In addition to several late round finishes along with a runner-up in Saturday's event, Brian Martel was named the 2019 Fall Fling MVP.

BELOW: Another Fling tradition is the Reaction Time Challenge where 25 randomly selected drivers get one hit on the 'Tree. Any 0.00X earns the driver \$100, with a perfect 0.000 getting a cool grand. Shelby Miles was one of 11 who earned a Ben Franklin, with no one picking up the grand.



over the internet by MotorManiaTV, for the last couple of rounds of Friday's \$500K race, they attempted something special. Announcer Jared Pennington was positioned at the time slip booth and each winner was interviewed, in the same fashion as a big NHRA race.

"That was really special and just set the tone that we were racing on a truly big stage, which is what any of the Fling races are," said Dadas. "For me personally, it didn't give me time to think about the race itself, instead just taking it all in, the experience of it all."

"I am pretty hard on myself," he added. "I know my cars are good, so when I make a mistake like going red in the final, I feel as though I'm letting my cars down. But the other thing about the race was no double entries. It might sound silly, but I think it even relaxed me more. It was 'take all your marbles and go up there and try to make it count.' You didn't have a second shot, so it ups the pressure a little bit but it comes down to making one good run."

And there were a lot of "good runs" made throughout the week. Any of the Flings just seem to bring out the best in racers. While it's entirely possible to win races with reaction times not in the double-0 range, as Patton did with his 0.045, chances are that type of driving won't get you far. While we don't have the exact numbers, this event seemed to have more double-0 packages losing to even better double-0 packages. This is one race you don't "bring a knife to the gunfight." ¶

FALL FLING

BOXSCORE

Sparco Fall Fling 500K  
Presented By Optima Batteries  
Bristol Dragway, Bristol TN



American Race Cars/Race Tech  
Dragster Shootout  
W-Jake Woodring, Lenoir, NC  
R/U-Shane Maddox, Piedmont, SC

FST Wednesday  
W-Tim Thomas, Lumberton, NC  
R/U-Shawn Langdon, Danville, IN

Hansen Thursday  
W-Peeps Pennington, Three Rivers, TX  
R/U-Steve Law, Booneville, IN

ATI Friday  
W-Hunter Patton, Crockett, TX  
R/U-Matt Dadas, Vermillion, OH

JEGS Saturday  
W-Jeremy Hancock, Commerce, GA  
R/U-Brian Martel, Fredericksburg, VA

Fall Fling Reaction Time Winners  
Chris Borges  
Jared Pennington  
Jerry Brewer  
Lannan Barrilleau  
Mike Daugherty  
Thomas Bell  
Chris Weaver  
Shelby Miles  
Megan Lotts  
Blaine Mayer  
John Parks



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