

MPE Motorsports Report:

NHRA Thunder Valley Nationals
Bristol Dragway, Bristol, Tenn.
May 15-17, 2009

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Clay Millican says Bristol race is good time to start winning rounds

It's mid-May, but Clay Millican can't help but look ahead to September, when NHRA's 18-race regular season concludes and the exciting, six-race Countdown to the Championship decides the 2009 Full Throttle Drag Racing Series winners.

Millican, crew chief Lance Larsen and the Munford, Tenn.-based Hope4Sudan/Motorvation Top Fuel team want to be part of that showdown. They are busy preparing for the eighth series event – the Thunder Valley Nationals at Bristol (Tenn.) Dragway, May 15-17. Not only is it an in-state event, albeit 518 miles east of Munford and the Memphis area, but the picturesque race track is one of Millican's favorites.

"I think the track is one of the nicest we race at," he said. "It would be good for us to get some round wins and turn on the win light in the finals . . . and there's no reason why we can't.

"The car is running better than it has all year. We lost a close race to Brandon (Bernstein) at St. Louis (May 3) and we are definitely ready to get back out there. All-in-all, the car ran like Lance wanted it to in St. Louis, but it wasn't quite enough."

Millican is 11th in series points (194) and sits 108 points behind 10th place and 126 behind ninth with 11 races to go before the top 10 drivers advance to the Countdown.

"They say men can't move mountains, but Bruton Smith did when he built the new Bristol Dragway," said Millican, who was runner-up there in 2004. "I know we have a lot of fans that come to Bristol and cheer us on. We'd like to give them something to cheer about this weekend."

Once-popular Friday night qualifying is scheduled at Bristol Dragway with the second session beginning at 7:30 p.m. "The fans love nighttime racing and I've always enjoyed it, too," added Millican, "especially when I'm at the wheel of the race car."

The drive to the Countdown picks up speed after the Thunder Valley event. A string of seven races in nine weeks begins May 31 in Topeka, Kan., and ends July 26 in Sonoma, Calif. "We have to start (adding to the point total) now or it will be an uphill battle," he said. "It's just a matter of going rounds at every race."

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Bristol qualifying schedule:

**Friday: 5 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, 12:30 and 3 p.m.
Sunday eliminations, noon**

Television schedule

ESPN2 and ESPN2 HD, all times EDT

**Saturday: qualifying coverage, two hours, 6 p.m. Sunday: NHRA Today, 30-minute pre-race show, 11 a.m.;
eliminations coverage, three hours, 30 minutes, 7 p.m.**

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