

MPE Motorsports Report:

NHRA Route 66 Nationals
Route 66 Raceway
Joliet, Ill, June 5-7, 2009

Clay Millican
Drummonds, Tenn.
Hope4Sudan/Motorvation Top Fuel Dragster
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Clay Millican continues his quest for place In Top Fuel top 10 at Route 66 Raceway

The mere mention of Route 66 Raceway automatically triggers Clay Millican's memory of the 1998 debut of the sparkling race facility in Joliet, Ill.

"That's back where it all started for me," said the driver of the Hope4Sudan/Motorvation Top Fuel dragster. "That was my first Top Fuel race, in June 1998. I drove the Chicago White Sox car that was the first ever to pull out on the racetrack . . . and then I did the most embarrassing thing I've ever done.

"I did a reverse burnout," he added, painfully recalling the incident. "It was a heck of a debut and gave me a lasting memory of the track. Fortunately, things got better from that point on."

Millican did register his first four-second run that weekend, adding, "It really worked out well, and it was fun driving the Chicago White Sox car."

Each time the Drummonds, Tenn.-based driver comes back to Joliet, he does so intending to supplant that old recollection with a current one that includes winner's circle photos after Sunday's eliminations. That is on the team's agenda for the Route 66 Nationals, Friday through Sunday.

Millican arrives following his strong Full Throttle Racing Series runner-up finish at Topeka, Kan., Sunday that lifted him back into solid contention for one of the 10 positions available in the Countdown to the Championship. He is 11th, only 38 points out of the top 10.

"We managed to beat Brandon (Bernstein) for the first time in long time," said Millican, who improved his record against Bernstein to 7-4. "And we beat a few other people for the first time in awhile, too." It was his first title-round visit in five years and provided a confidence-boost to Lance Larsen and the crew.

"It was fun, but this has been one of those years where everything has been close, and we were always on the other end of it. Right now, we are hoping that cycle has shifted back our way. One race doesn't make a season, but it certainly helped us out."

Predicted weather conditions this weekend are far different from what the team faced in Topeka, where the temperatures were in the 90s and Larsen's warm-weather tune-up worked almost to perfection. "At the moment, it doesn't look like we'll get to rely on our hot-track setup," Millican commented, "We'll have to push our car harder this week to try to make it go really quick so we can go rounds again on Sunday.

"We do work weekends, and we want to work overtime this weekend."

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Route 66 Nationals schedule:

Pro qualifying: Friday, 2:30 p.m. and 6 pm.; Saturday, noon and 3 p.m. Final eliminations begin at 11 a.m. on Sunday.

ON TV: ESPN2 and ESPN2 HD, all times ET

Saturday, two hours of qualifying coverage at 10:30 p.m.; Sunday, NHRA Race Day, at 11 a.m., and two hours of eliminations coverage at 4 p.m.

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