

Clay Millican
Drummonds, Tenn.
Hope4Sudan/Motorvation/Matco/Lucas Oil Top Fuel Dragster

NHRA Kragen O'Reilly Winternationals
February 5-8, Auto Club Raceway at Pomona, Calif.

Dejected Millican misses Winternationals
Line-up after one qualifying attempt
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The mood in the MPE Motorsports Top Fuel trailer Saturday afternoon mirrored the gray, weeping skies above the venerable Los Angeles Fairplex race track. There were no tears, but Mark Pickens, Clay Millican - team owner and driver, respectively - and the crew were very dejected after placing 17th in the only qualifying session for season-opening Full Throttle Drag Racing Series' Kragen O'Reilly Winternationals.

So, instead of competing in Sunday's 16-car eliminations, they'll be loading up the Hope4Sudan/Motorvation dragster and beginning preparations for the next stop - at Firebird Raceway in Chandler, Ariz., Feb. 20-22.

The rain that kept drivers on the sidelines since Thursday returned again Saturday, but subsided long enough for the pro categories to get a lone attempt. Millican's car shook the tires and he pedaled the throttle twice to see if he could get it to hook up, but his 5.142-second time at 144.84 mph wasn't quick enough to solidify a place in the top 16.

"This is not a fun way to start the season," said the dejected Millican after the day's final downpour doused the last qualifying session. "It is very disappointing.

"It was good to get in our first run of the season," he added. "It is always hard for the driver to get on that roller coaster ride when he hasn't been on it for awhile. I would've shut (the engine) off if it was a regular run, but I tried to see if it would run better down the track."