

CLAY MILLICAN: CLEAN AND WAITING FOR GREEN

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Flood waters devastated Clay Millican's shop but not his spirit

Remarkably resilient Top Fuel pilot Clay Millican is filled with energy, enthusiasm, and optimism, even after flood waters engulfed the MPE Motorsports headquarters earlier this year, putting a serious delay in the team's return to drag racing. Following major clean-up efforts, Millican is ready and waiting to get back on the track.

A six-time IHRA champion who finished in the top 10 in NHRA's Full Throttle Series for the first time last season, Millican was faced with sponsorship challenges entering 2010 that had his Mark and Lauren Pickens-owned operation on hold. The severe flood that brought major damage to their Munford, Tenn., home base could have been too much to overcome, but a strong community effort buoyed their spirits from the minute the flood waters subsided.

"As soon as the water was gone, that very day we had the hugest group of friends show up," said Millican. "We literally had all of the mud out of the shop in just a few hours. Mark and Lauren Pickens have to be among the most dedicated team owners ever. It would have been easy for them to say, 'Phooley, we're done with this whole thing.' But they didn't, and I can't say enough about how awesome they are."

While he hasn't been driving his race car, Millican has still had a very busy season. The efforts to acquire sponsorship alone can be exhausting, but clean-up from the watery disaster has been intense; loads of mildew-ridden paperwork had to be dried and ironed, and 14 short blocks, over 700 clutch disks, and a few hundred floaters were among the thousands of parts and pieces that had to be cleaned and put back in place. Personal vehicles, race rigs and trailers, and multiple race cars needed much attention as well.

Tireless, Millican has also been heavily involved in television work and has been a fixture on PINKS All Out on Speed Network this season. Additionally, the affable Southerner has been afforded the opportunity to spend quality time with his family: wife Donna and sons Dalton and Cale. Dalton, 17, is active in AMA ATV Motocross and competes in two different classes, Production A and 450 A, and Millican has been able to watch his youngest offspring race to the top 5 in points in both categories.

The rebuild of the operation, TV time - with more to come in the future, and family bonding have caused much of this year to go by in a hurry, and now Millican is ready to get back in the driver's seat.

"We're ready to go race right now, and we have very high hopes that we will be at a racetrack before the season is over with," said Millican.

"We've been working extremely hard to be fully prepared for next season, and that's exciting. I can't wait to get back behind the wheel of a Top Fuel car and mash the gas. Everything is in place, with the exception of a crew chief. It's tough because there are so few guys who are really, really good, but that's a good problem to be working on. That means we're going racing."