



Flood water wreaks havoc at Clay Millican's Top Fuel race shop

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The heavy weekend rain that tormented Tennessee and other surrounding states was devastating for many people, including popular NHRA Top Fuel driver Clay Millican and team owner Mark Pickens.

“Now I know what they mean by flash flooding,” said Millican as he began to describe the destruction Saturday’s flood waters brought to the MPE Motorsports shop in Munford, Tenn.

“The shop was a mess,” he said. “There was three feet of water in it and the water receded almost as quickly as it came. It was probably in the building about two hours and it was gone. But it left the floors, trailers – everything in there -- covered in mud.”

A friend phoned Millican Saturday morning “about 7:30 and said I’d better get over to the shop in a hurry because the water was rising and it was across the street from our shop,” Millican continued. “It took me about 10 minutes to get there, but there was already three feet of water in the building, it came up that quick. So, when they said flash flooding, it can be there in a flash.

“We were lucky. There were people down the street from us that got trapped by the water in their building. They were trying to clean things up and the water came in so quick they had to go to the upper level. The fire department came by in boats and got them out.”

Although Millican has not raced in 2010, he and Pickens have been on sponsor searches and planned to be ready when the opportunity arose. But the muddy residue destroyed much of what was in the building. What wasn't totaled, however, will require days and weeks of painstaking cleaning and repairing.

“We had a brand new dragster ready to go sitting on the floor. It had no tires or rear end, so it was close to being submerged,” Millican noted. “The car we ran last year was complete and the water got in it. The muck was about a foot deep in both of our race trailers.

“T.J. Tracey's Super Comp dragster was in the water as well his personal and so was our clutch guy Dave Gaterell's car. We had two race trailers and three additional trailers that haul Sportsman cars, and a whole bunch of (son) Dalton's four-wheel racing gear was damaged.”

The list went on as Millican ticked off more damage that included the team's two tractor trucks and the tow vehicle.

“Mark had two Top Sportsman Corvettes sitting on the floor, and his wife Lauren's Porsche was in the parking lot because she left her car to ride to St. Louis (for the Midwest Nationals) in Mark's rig.”

Pickens' Porsche Cayenne also was in the parking lot because Millican – who had ridden to St. Louis with Pickens – opted to return home early to be with his ill father-in-law, Denvil Hutchison.

“It's been a heck of a cleaning project,” added Millican. “This happened Saturday and we've worked 16-17-hour days and we only have a very small piece of it done.

“There are some huge benefits from living in a small town (Munford) for a long time. We have some awesome friends. The moment the authorities would let us into the building, people started showing up. They brought their strong backs and we squeegeed and got a lot of the mud off the floor.”

That, however, is the easy part. The meticulous chore of cleaning everything is just beginning.

“It's going to be a long process going through each motor and everything on the dragsters,” added Millican. “They will have to be completely disassembled. Everything is dirty and I don't really know how much stuff we'll end up losing, but, obviously, it will be a lot.”

He then ticked off affected items like “eight-to-10 (motor) short blocks with studs, hundreds and hundreds of clutch discs, all of our computers, all of our files – years and years of them – everything regarding the team and all of our sponsor stuff.”

Some cherished items like his 52 IHRA race winner's trophies and six series championship trophies avoided damaged. His extensive memorabilia collection, unfortunately, was not spared.

"All of my pictures, team shirts and photos, everything . . . it's all gone.

"There are a lot of people around here that lost their homes, and we feel for them. There's only so much water the drainage systems can do. They couldn't handle the 10-inches or so of rain in a short period of time.

"It's crazy. I guess the best way to summarize it for us is – wet, good friends and lots of clean up."

This has been devastating," said a somber Pickens. "We thank everybody for their prayers and support."

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