

Thomas Nataas and Andersens shine at Turtle Wax Internationals

Thomas Nataas and Andersen Racing took the Turtle Wax Internationals by storm with a dominant win for the reigning FIA European champion and two new European records! And as a bonus, with one race to go, Nataas extended his lead in the title race to 69 points.

With eight Top Fuelers entered no non-qualifying problems at the Turtle Wax Internationals. But for the teams no reason to hold back as Tierp Arena's record track is of course the place to show your real form and set new personal bests. And don't forget the close championship race, where Thomas Nataas was in the lead, with only one point behind Stig Neergaard, five points Micke Kågered and fourteen points Anita Mäkelä.

After a clutch problem in the first qualifying session, Nataas' second run was a solid 4.02 sec., not the 3-second run everybody hoped for, but still good for the number one position after qualifying. Behind the Per and Karsten Andersen tuned car is was close again with five cars within three hundredth of a second! In the third run Antti Horto in the RFM Eagle Motorsports dragster jumped from fifth into the number two spot with a great 4.06 sec.. Urs Erbacher was back to form with a 4.0744 sec., only one thousandth of a second quicker than Mäkelä, who had a scary moment in the second run when the front wing touched the wall. Duncan Micallef was fifth (4.092) and number six qualifier Chris Andrews was also not far behind the leaders with his 4.095 sec. Problems for Alastaro winner Stig Neergaard and Hockenheim winner Micke Kågered who could not match the numbers of the other drivers and were in seventh and eight qualifying position.

Upsets in the first round of eliminations, especially for the frontrunners in the championship. Neergaard had problems with his parachute and couldn't even start, handing the win to Horto. In a great race Micallef defeated Mäkelä and so the numbers two and four in the championship were already out. As Nataas had to face Kågered, the numbers one and three in the title race, there would only be one of the top four in the semi-finals. Again Nataas did what he had to do and in 4.06 sec. the Norwegian took the win. The reigning champion could now start to extend his lead.

And Nataas did! In the semi-finals he defeated Micallef, but even more impressive was the 3.957 sec., the first 3-second run of the weekend, and the speed of 501.86 kph (311.84 mph), the first 500 kph Top Fuel run in the 1000 feet era. In the other semi-final Erbacher, who won a great pedal fest over Andrews in the first round, had problems immediately after the start and saw Horto advance to the final in another solid 4.08 sec.

But in the winning mood Nataas and Per and Karsten Andersen were not ready yet. In the final against Horto Nataas ran another 3.95, but now an (of course winning) 3.955 sec. a new European record (was 3.965). The speed of the Andersen Racing car this time was 500.46 kph, a back up to make the 501.86 kph the new European speed record (was 494.05 kph). With his win Nataas extended his lead to 69 points over Neergaard, who is still in second. Four points short of the Dane is Kågered and Mäkelä fourth, five point behind the Swede.