


The sport of drag racing isn't just shaped by those who win or lose, or what e.t. or speed they ran. That's ancient history. The level of competition has gotten so high and complex that strategy, logistics, partnerships, goals, and audience all participate in a modern win.

And in an era when more people see more drag racing every day — strike that, every hour — than ever before, some of the people shaping the sport do so when they aren't even behind the wheel of a drag car. Who are these people? What are they trying to accomplish, and what are they looking to change about the sport we all love?

The NHRA has enjoyed amazing growth over the last decade thanks in part to individuals and organizations who promote, support, and enjoy the sport and continue to move it forward.

In the inaugural compilation of NHRA's Movers, Shakers, and Deal Makers, NHRA recognizes the contributions of many of those most recently responsible for the growing success of the sport. 

RODGER BROGDON

competitor, owner of RoofTec

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DRAG AND DRIVE EVENTS

JOHN FORCE owner, John Force Racing

Above and beyond the fact that John Force is NHRA's winningest driver, with a record 16 Funny Car championships and 155 national victories – a number that likely will never be challenged – drag racing's G.O.A.T. has excelled in so many areas of the sport that have helped NHRA continue to grow. The list of new sponsors and companies that Force, through his gregarious and everyman nature, has introduced to the sport and numerous safety and technical innovations could fill many volumes. As a spokesperson for NHRA out in the world, there are few bigger cheerleaders, and when John

Force speaks, people listen. He's become the very public face of the sport, known to even those who do not follow the NHRA closely.

"I've been doing this for 50 years. I do it because I love doing it," said Force. "I love the cheer of the crowd and the fans. I love the sponsors. I love the people and the camaraderie of the teams. In drag racing, you've got two cars side by side; sometimes you've got men racing women. The smell of nitromethane, header fire, cars at 338 mph, side by side, smoking the tires, wheelstanding – it's got everything. You can get your picture or an autograph with your favorite driver. It's a family sport. Bring your family in the morning and watch them warm the cars up – you can be there all day. That's why sponsors come here."

Even though he's still a proven winner, Force has for decades been working to ensure the sport's future with his Next Generation program that brought us drivers like three-time world champion Robert Hight, Austin Prock, Tony Pedregon, and Eric Medlen. Force's own family has played a huge role, as daughters Ashley, Brittany, and Courtney all followed their father into the cockpit and the winner's circle, and grandsons Jacob and Noah and granddaughter Autumn all compete in the NHRA Jr. Drag Racing League and look forward to faster cars in their future.

"I love the sport, I always have," he said. "It's been very successful for me to be a part of it, to raise my children, and I just feel like I owe the sport back, to have my children involved and now my grandchildren involved, just trying to grow for the future."

JOSH HART

Top Fuel team owner and driver, owner of Burnyzz Speed Shop

In his short time as a team owner and driver, Josh Hart has already made an impression. Yes, he caught everyone's attention by winning Top Fuel at the 2021 Amalie Motor Oil NHRA Gatornationals in his national event debut – but he also stepped into the role of team owner in an intense arena unfit for the faint of heart. Hart recognized the challenge of such endeavors but was able to assemble a professional program that rivaled the elder statesmen of the sport.

JULIE NATAAS

Top Alcohol Dragster driver

After sweeping both the Baby Gators regional event and the Amalie Motor Oil NHRA Gatornationals, Julie Nataas is currently the points leader in the Top Alcohol Dragster category. While it's still early in the season, no one should be the least bit surprised by her success.

Anyone who has followed the Norway-born Nataas, from her earliest days as a Jr. drag racer and Super Comp driver in Europe to her current status as a championship contender with Randy Meyer's injected nitro team, has likely taken notice of her drive and determination. After a string of impressive top 10 finishes, she's clearly got her sights set a bit higher this season, most notably the championship.

"Of course, [the championship] is our goal every year, but sometimes things happen that you can't control. Last year, we got off to a great start and then lost a little something

TAYLOR VETTER Top Alcohol Dragster driver

Despite the fact that it's an A to B sport that plays out in mere seconds at a time, there is actually very little about drag racing that is easy. In some subdivisions of categories, the challenge is of considerable significance, and Taylor Vetter welcomes the challenge of driving one of the only supercharged Top Alcohol Dragsters in competition on the NHRA tour. Not only is she willing to tackle the tall order of performing the burnout at the correct rpm, mastering the clutch pedal, swapping feet at the right time, and hitting the shift points – she's thrilled to do so and shudders at the thought of driving a more straightforward A/Fuel combination.

Las Vegas native Vetter also races Super Comp and Top Alcohol Dragster, was a quick study behind the wheel of the Nick Januik-tuned blown Top Alcohol Dragster. She made her debut late in 2021 as the only female to opt for the supercharged combination and committed to a full season in 2022. At the Charlotte NHRA Four-Wide Nationals that year, Vetter reached the final, locked down top speed of the meet,

JIM AND ANNE WHITELEY racers, sponsors, and owners of J&A Service

Jim Whiteley has been gripped by drag racing since he was old enough to walk. He recalls being enthralled by hot rods on television or at the local dragstrip, and he's raced everything from Super Pro to alcohol and Pro Mod. He calls it a passion, and he and wife Annie, a Top Alcohol Funny Car champion, pour into it. They are both racers competing under the YNot Racing banner, but they don't race alone. Their business, J&A Service, graces a multitude of race cars in NHRA Drag Racing.

J&A Service is a professional oil and gas service company that performs completion, flowback, and production operations for exploration and production companies. In simple terms, they build oil field and industrial equipment, and they sell, lease, or operate it for the customer. The business has benefited from drag racing, and drag racing has benefited from the business. In addition to backing various drivers and teams, they've also sponsored select series within the sport, including the NHRA Pro Mod Drag Racing Series for several seasons.

Whiteley says that when their children were young, they used racing as an incentive to keep their grades up. If the grades were good, the children

were allowed to run their Jr. Dragsters. Young Steven Whiteley was bit by the drag racing bug at age 6 and made his Jr. Dragster debut as soon as he was the then-legal age of 8. Steven found his way to Pro Mod, while stepbrother Cory Reed opted for the two-wheeled sector. The J&A Service logo can also be found on the Pro Stock Motorcycle ridden by Joey Gladstone, the Top Alcohol Dragster wheeled by reigning world champion Joey Severance,

Top Dragster entries piloted by Delaina Whiteley and Anita Strasburg, and on the Top Sportsman cars manned by John and Kyle Baker.

"It's simple; we just love drag racing," said Whiteley. "I'd love to see more support for the Sportsman racer, all the way from Jr. Dragsters up to alcohol. For as long as we're capable, we'll continue. There are a lot of variables out there, with the economy and the way the world