



Lone Star

Millican Corrals 9th No. 1 Season Qualifier at Texas Before McMillen Outruns Parts Plus Dragster in Sunday Semis Showdown

ENNIS, TEXAS, Oct. 8, 2018: No. 2 ranked Clay Millican entered the NHRA Fall Nationals weekend at Texas Motorplex looking to continue the Parts Plus Top Fuel team's Wally-taking, record-breaking, stands-shaking, track-quaking season.

Millican proved to be quick on the draw from the get-go, running a 3.846@320.66 mph to shoot to No. 1 and pick up three bonus points in the process. Meanwhile, in the other lane, points leader Steve Torrence clicked it off early.

Millican strengthened his grip on the top spot in Q2, closing out his Friday qualifying efforts in a blaze of glory with a blazin' quick 3.726@328.54 mph. Millican's homerun incremental times: 60-ft.—0.829 sec.; 330-ft.—2.120; and 660-ft.—2.995@291.26 mph.

"Honestly, Grubby [crew chief David Grubnic] typically has a great idea of what this Parts Plus car is going to run," Millican says. "But that has all gone out the window since the Countdown started—and I mean that in a good way. I really didn't think we were going to go .72 tonight. What Grubby is doing right now is totally impressive, and the kids putting this together are unbelievable. This team works hard and prepares every week we're out here—that makes my job a heck of a lot easier."

Torrence had Millican in his sights on Saturday, as the No. 1-ranked driver squared once more against the No. 1 qualifier in Q3. This time, Torrence's car galloped a little quicker, but it wasn't enough to surpass the Parts Plus/Stringer Performance team for the top qualifying spot.



Officially, Torrence ran a 3.743@327.82 mph, edging Millican's 3.749@329.42, good for the best and second-best times of the session, respectively. Torrence's Q3 incremental times: 60-ft.–0.838 sec.; 330-ft.–2.130; and 660-ft.–3.008@289.57 mph. Millican's incremental times: 60-ft.–0.838 sec.; 330-ft.–2.131; and 660-ft.–3.017@288.33 mph.

In Q4, the top two drivers faced off in their final weekend showdown in qualifying, with the Parts Plus Top Fuel dragster outrunning Torrence for the quickest pass of the session with a 3.743@ 324.83 mph.

When the dust settled, Millican had lassoed his ninth No. 1 qualifier of the 2018 Mello Yello Series, the first driver to accomplish such a feat in nine years. Unfortunately for Millican, this set up a first-round matchup Sunday with Richie Crampton, who uncharacteristically struggled to make the field but has managed to rebound in the past on race day.

In an interview Saturday afternoon with FOX Sports, a jubilant Millican—holding his ninth green hat of the year—also credited Parts Plus and their strategic partners with “giving me a car that is capable of running quick enough to earn that No. 1 spot each and every week. Now, we just have to go out there Sunday, turn on some win lights, gobble up more points, and close the gap between Stevie (Torrence) and me.”

Grubby was very aware of how dangerous Crampton can be on race day, so he had the Parts Plus dragster tuned to run a low 3.7. In a fantastic side-by-side race, Crampton seized the starting-line advantage, but the Parts Plus driver chased him down by the 60-ft mark and never looked back for the win. Officially, Millican's 3.744@328.54 mph topped Crampton's 3.784@314.83 mph to advance the Parts Plus team to second round.

Millican maintained the hot hand in round two, eliminating Leah Pritchett to advance to the semis with a 3.783@321.50 mph. The popular Parts Plus driver would face off against his buddy Terry McMillen in E3 for a crucial shot at the final, mostly like against Torrence.

In E3, the Parts Plus dragster launched hard right and held the starting-line advantage until the car suddenly went quiet, enabling McMillen to chase down Millican and hold off his buddy for the win in a bit of a semis shocker.



Even worse news on an otherwise brilliant weekend: Torrence went on to win his third-straight Countdown event, outlasting McMillen in the finals. The Parts Plus team's incredible performance did manage to distance Millican from No. 3-ranked Tony Schumacher; however, the Tennessee native is now 103 points behind Torrence, who won for the first time in his home state.

TOP-10 POINT STANDINGS

Following the 33rd annual AAA Texas NHRA Fall Nationals at Texas Motorplex, the 21st of 24 events in the NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series.

TOP FUEL

1. Steve Torrence, 2,468; 2. Clay Millican, 2,365; 3. Tony Schumacher, 2,303; 4. Leah Pritchett, 2,244; 5. Antron Brown, 2,221; 6. Terry McMillen, 2,189; 7. Doug Kalitta, 2,169; 8. Mike Salinas, 2,150; 9. Brittany Force, 2,140; 10. Scott Palmer, 2,117

NEXT RACE

NHRA Carolina Nationals
zMax Dragway
10/12–10/14

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