

**2022 NHRA World Champs, continued from pg 11**

“To win a championship then become a team owner and have that No. 1 on the car and then having to beat Robert Hight and his team, which has had phenomenal success here at this track, it just blows my mind that we’re here. It’s going to sink in soon.”

Smith earned his third straight world title in Pro Stock Motorcycle and sixth overall with a victory in the first round on his Denso Auto Parts Buell. It’s also the fourth in five years for Smith, who has forged an incredible dynasty in the loaded category in recent years. The sixth championship also meant a great deal for Smith, who picked up four wins in 2022, as it ties him with Andrew Hines and Dave Schultz for the most in class history. It was the goal all season and Smith was proud to make it a reality on Sunday.

“This Denso bike has been awesome this year,” Smith said. “Angie’s had a great bike. We took my motor out from the last two races and put it in her bike because we had a shout of being one and two in points and I think we just missed it but hats off to her. She’s had a heck of a season going to three finals this year and winning the last race and then I won four races and won the championship. To be the one Pro Stock Motorcycle rider who has won every Camping World Drag Racing Series championship so far is pretty amazing.”

In the Top Fuel final round, Austin Prock finished off his impressive run in the Countdown to the Championship playoffs, winning for the second time in the postseason by going a remarkable 3.641-seconds at 336.23 mph in the final round in his 11,000-horsepower Montana Brand/Rocky Mountain Twist dragster. The career-best run sent him past Antron Brown and to his third career victory, also vaulting him to third in points to finish off the year.

“I’m so happy for (crew chief) Rahn Tobler,” Prock said. “I’ve had a blast working with him. He’s an absolute legend in the sport and to go out like he did tonight speaks volumes about what he’s done for the sport. That was the quickest run he’s ever made in history, and it was his last one. Then during the semifinals (against Brittany Force), we were the quickest side-by-side run (in Top Fuel history). I’m really proud of Rahn and I still get butterflies when I watch him roll into the staging beams. He’s accomplished so much in the sport, and he believes in me to drive his race car. He came out of retirement to come work with me and that means a lot to me. It gives me a lot of confidence and I’m glad we went out on top with him.”

Brown finished second in points by advancing to the final round for the fourth time in 2022.

Cruz Pedregon was dominant to close out the year in Funny Car, winning his first race of the year and setting a string of career-bests along the way. The topper was an outstanding 3.839 at 335.65 in his 11,000-horsepower Snap-On Tools Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat in the final round against Capps, putting the two-time world champ on a great path heading into 2023. Pedregon made four runs of 3.84 in qualifying and then was stellar throughout eliminations to pick up his 39th career victory.

“This weekend feels surreal to me,” Pedregon said. “I’ve had some really great cars I’ve been fortunate to drive in my career, but this car is the best race car I’ve ever driven by a long shot. It says a lot for the team. I do want to point out we added Lee Beard as a con-

sultant on the car, but I have to shout out (crew chief) John Collins and the team who has been with me for two years now and give them the credit. What Lee brought to the table fit what we were already doing. It all came together.”

Greg Anderson didn’t grab a championship this year in Pro Stock, as Erica Enders rolled to her fifth title, but he did close out 2022 with a victory in Pomona, getting past Enders in the final round with a pass of 6.516 at 210.31 in his HendrickCars.com Chevrolet Camaro. It hands Anderson his 101st career win, as well as a perfect sendoff for departing owner Ken Black, who watched his final race on Sunday in Pomona.

“It was an emotional weekend for me. It’s been 20 years of glory, to be honest,” Anderson said. “It’s been a heck of a ride with (team owner) Ken, Judy, and the entire Black family. They’ve done everything for me. They’ve made all my hopes and dreams and wishes come true. I never dreamt in my life that I could ever achieve anything like this and I couldn’t do it without Ken Black. He absolutely made it happen.”

“We had 20 great years together. I love the man, love the family. He’s like a second father to me. So, coming into the weekend in Pomona, we know we’re not going to win a world championship this year so really the only way to give him a small thank you for all he’s done. All the cards fell right today. I felt great all weekend. I felt good as a driver and had a good weekend of driving. My race car was fast and the chips all fell down right. I think it all came down to the best way I could have written the story, just like back at Indy. I think these wins, when I won Indy this year when I got No. 100 and this one to give Ken Black his final trophy, probably my two biggest wins. It’s incredible.”

Enders advanced to her 13th final round in 2022, the finishing touches on one of the most dominant seasons in Pro Stock history. She ends the year with a career-best 10 wins.

In Pro Stock Motorcycle, Angie Smith helped the team finish the season with a victory for the third straight year, knocking off Joey Gladstone with a 6.749 at 199.55 on her Denso Auto Parts Buell. Smith, who picked up her first win of the season, has now won the finale twice in the past three years, making it an all-Smith winner’s circle for the race and championship. She set the track speed record earlier in the weekend and then put together a string of quality runs on Sunday, finishing a career-best third in points.

“I just needed to go out there and qualify well and just turn on win lights,” A. Smith said. “I think my goal in qualifying was just to make straight runs and every run we were going faster and faster, so I knew I had a good bike going into race day. Everybody that we race are very tough competitors. I did my job and I won it on a holeshot (in the final round). I think I’d rather win on a holeshot over anything. It’s nice to outrun people but winning on a holeshot is pretty epic.”

Gladstone advanced to his sixth final round of the season, finishing second in points.

The 2023 NHRA Camping World Drag Racing Series season begins March 9-12 with the 54th annual Amalie Motor Oil NHRA Gatornationals at historic Gainesville Raceway.

**2023 NHRA SCHEDULE**

**MAR 09 - 12:** AMALIE Motor Oil NHRA Gatornationals  
Gainesville Raceway, Gainesville FL

**MAR 24 - 26:** NHRA Arizona Nationals  
Wild Horse Pass Motorsports Park, Chandler, AZ

**MAR 30 - APR 02:** Lucas Oil NHRA Winternationals  
In-N-Out Burger Pomona Dragstrip, Pomona, CA

**APR 14 - 16:** NHRA Four-Wide Nationals  
The Strip at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, Las Vegas, NV

**APR 28 - 30:** NHRA Four-Wide Nationals  
zMAX Dragway, Concord, NC

**MAY 19 - 21:** Route 66 NHRA Nationals presented by PEAK Performance  
Route 66 Raceway, Elwood, IL

**JUN 02 - 04:** NHRA New England Nationals  
New England Dragway, Epping, NH

**JUN 09 - 11:** NHRA Thunder Valley Nationals  
Bristol Dragway, Bristol, TN

**JUN 22 - 25:** Summit Racing Equipment NHRA Nationals  
Summit Racing Equipment Motorsports Park, Norwalk, OH

**JUL 14 - 16:** Dodge Power Brokers NHRA Mile-High Nationals  
Bandimere Speedway, Morrison, CO

**JUL 21 - 23:** Flav-R-Pac NHRA Northwest Nationals  
Pacific Raceways, Kent, WA

**JUL 28 - 30:** DENSO NHRA Sonoma Nationals  
Sonoma Raceway, Sonoma, CA

**AUG 11 - 13:** Menards NHRA Nationals Presented By PetArmor  
Heartland Motorsports Park, Topeka, KS

**AUG 17 - 20:** Lucas Oil NHRA Nationals  
Brainerd International Raceway, Brainerd, MN

**AUG 30 - SEP 04:** Dodge Power Brokers NHRA U.S. Nationals  
Lucas Oil Indianapolis Raceway Park, Indianapolis, IN

**SEP 14 - 17:** Pep Boys NHRA Nationals  
Maple Grove Raceway, Mohnton, PA

**SEP 22 - 24:** NHRA Carolina Nationals  
zMAX Dragway, Concord, NC

**SEP 29 - OCT 01:** NHRA Midwest Nationals  
World Wide Technology Raceway, Madison, IL

**OCT 12 - 15:** Texas NHRA Fall Nationals  
Texas Motorplex, Ennis, TX

**OCT 26 - 29:** NHRA Nevada Nationals  
The Strip at Las Vegas Motor Speedway (Fall), Las Vegas, NV

**NOV 09 - 12:** In-N-Out Burger NHRA Finals  
In-N-Out Burger Pomona Dragstrip, Pomona, CA