

**A SERIES OF FIRST AT THE GATORNATIONALS MARCH 11-13 2022**

*Story: Nancy Elles*

As a long time fan of all racing platforms, this was my first time at the GATOR-NATIONALS in Gainesville, FL. The first thing I learned is to prepare for all kinds of weather. Friday was pouring rain all day which leads to a muddy mess in the field where everyone parks. A real muddy mess. Because of the rain all events on Friday were cancelled

Saturday was first day of any action on the track. Started late in the afternoon due to track drying. Very windy and cold. Dragsters, Funny Cars, Motorcycles. First round took several hours into the evening. Second round was cancelled due to cold weather. This means on Sunday some of the drivers have still not been on the track at all.

One reason I wanted to go to this event is because it is the first season for Tony Stewart Racing in the NHRA. Tony's drivers, Leah Pruitt in Top Fuel Dragster, and Matt Hagan in a Funny Car, are both top drivers in their division.

Hagen did get his first win this weekend after 13 previous runs. First win for TSR in the NHRA Drag

Racing series. Leah was eliminated early on but participated in the inaugural run of the All-Star Top Fuel call out. This is where Top fuel drivers race against each other for a winner take all payout. Leah was called to compete with Steve Torrence. Again, due to weather, only one round was run. Remaining rounds will be held on September 3.

Another first for TSR, Tony's driver, Chase Briscoe also won his first career win in the NASCAR series.

One more first for me. I met Shirley Muldowney, the First Lady of drag racing.



She was signing posters and very few people knew she was there. I was able to talk to her for a little while. She misses racing and her last time in a dragster was August 2003.

Lastly, I will go to this event again. It was exciting to see and hear. When those cars hit 300 mph the stands rumble and you feel it through your whole body.

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