

# Southern Comfort

Canadians shine in Georgia



By Graeme Jones

Photos by Robert Grice Photography

**V**ALDOSTA, GA – A handful of feisty Canucks recently sent their American racing brethren a friendly reminder that Canada has some of the best talent in the world on two wheels.

Geoff Pollard, Mike Konopacki, Terry Schweigert and Yves Giard ran neck and neck with the best in the world at The AMA DRAGBIKE National Finals in Valdosta, GA on Nov. 14-16, proving that 'Team Canada' can hang in the most competitive motorcycle drag racing series on the planet.

The National Finals have a tendency to draw some of the biggest and most competitive fields of the year, with many a racer laying it all on the line at the last race of the season. The Canadians made their presence known at this year's event at South Georgia Motorsports Park, from the elite ranks of Top Fuel down to the thick and competitive Sportsman classes.

Pollard (Dorchester, ON) reached the biggest milestone of his illustrious career during qualifying in the Heroes of Top Fuel class. He became the first Canadian on a motorcycle to record a five-second quarter-mile run after a powerful 5.963-second blast at 233.32 mph aboard the Pollard

Nitrosports Top Fuel bike.

With the season coming to a close after this race, the team pushed harder in eliminations and ran an even quicker 5.932 at a tremendous 241.84 miles per hour. The dream weekend would fall short in the finals however as Pollard's ride had trouble, giving nitro veteran Chris Hand the class victory.

Konopacki (Hampton, ON) not only had a banner weekend at the National Finals, but also ended up with three class championships for the 2009 season.

'Kono' qualified fourth in both Top Gas (8.20 index) and Pro ET as well as 17th in Super Comp (8.90 index), each of which had over 30 entries. In Top Gas and Super Comp he won a combined 12 consecutive rounds of racing to reach the SGMP winner's circle in both classes. Luck wasn't on his side in Pro ET eliminations, but he still had enough points to win the season title in all three classes. Luck wasn't on his side in Pro ET eliminations, but he still had enough points to win the season title in all three classes. Luck wasn't on his side in Pro ET eliminations, but he still had enough points to win the season title in all three classes. Luck wasn't on his side in Pro ET eliminations, but he still had enough points to win the season title in all three classes.

Schweigert

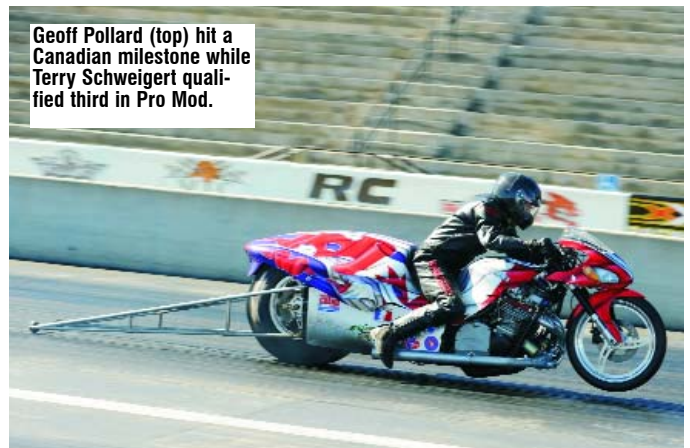
(Abbotsford, BC) purchased a new Pro Mod Suzuki earlier this year and has been competing exclusively in the U.S., running very quick from the get-go. In Valdosta he qualified third in the Mickey Thompson Pro Mod class among 17 bikes thanks to a career best 6.758 at 200.86 mph.

His nitrous-injected Suzuki would falter in the first round, but Schweigert's qualifying performance earned some serious cred in what has become one of the most popular and competitive classes in motorcycle drag racing today. It is rumoured that the former CMDRA Pro Modified racer will run the AMA DRAGBIKE and ADRL tours in the U.S. in 2010.

Funnybike veteran Yves Giard (Saint-Hyacinthe, QC) has been in the game for many years and continues to roll with the big guns on his trusted GSX-R. Despite using somewhat outdated and underpowered equipment compared to the higher-profile racers in the class, Giard still managed to qualify fifth in a full 16-bike field with a 6.928 at 194.04 miles per hour.

Giard won his first round match with Tom Housteau but couldn't get down the track in round 2, handing the win to his opponent Perry Hollie.

Another Canadian that ran well in Valdosta was Adam Konopacki (Mike's son), who reached round 3 in the Super Comp division before losing to his dad in a double-breakout race decided by .011 seconds! He also went three rounds on Saturday and five rounds on Sunday in the Pro ET class.



Geoff Pollard (top) hit a Canadian milestone while Terry Schweigert qualified third in Pro Mod.