



Three For Three

By Michael Beard • Photos by Bryan Epps



There are three ways to qualify for IHRA's new Tournament of Champions, slated to be contested at the IHRA World Finals, in Rockingham, N.C. Drivers can qualify by winning a national event, whether it be a Nitro Jam event or a Champion System Sportsman Nationals presented by VP Race Fuel, by finishing in the top three of the points standings in one of six divisions on the Summit Pro-Am Tour presented by Mr. Gasket, or by winning the Summit Allstars race. Holly Hill, Fla.'s Myron Piatek has run the table.

Piatek jumpstarted a tremendous year, reminiscent of his 2006 Stock World Championship season, by defeating the best of the best in the Summit Allstars race to gain entry to the Tournament of Champions. Throughout the meat of the season, his Locomotion J/CM '75 Dart Sport has graced the pages of DRM time and time again for numerous achievements. Piatek mowed down a tremendous five consecutive final rounds, including three Pro-Am wins and a runner-up, followed by a Sportsman Nationals runner-up. Piatek then sewed up the Heat Wave Stock Championship with another Pro-Am runner-up at Darlington. While each driver can only qualify for the Tournament of Champions in a given class once, Piatek still succeeded in keeping another potential competitor from joining the fray. Even more importantly, however, he will pick up a first round bye run in the Tournament, which is a bonus bestowed upon each Division Champion.

Not content to rest on his laurels, Piatek struck again at the IHRA President's Cup Nationals, hosted by Maryland International Raceway, in Budds Creek, Md. He fought from the 18th qualifying position (-.925 under 11.375) in a 37-car field, led by Bill Hawk's usual jaw-dropping -1.391 under 10.159 from his B/SA '67 Shelby.

"The ugly weather kept the number of competitors down, but the quality of competition was as high as ever," said Piatek. "I was red on the last time shot, and I got over-cautious first round against Gil Carty."

Piatek's season-worst and uncharacteristic .065 bulb held up for the win when Carty broke out.

"I dodged a bullet. I had two lucky runs," he said. "One was against Carty, and the other one was when I mis-dialed the car against Lisa Bolton."

Piatek backed up his second-round .002 light against Russell Linke with a .005 against Bolton, and he needed every bit of it, as his 11.458 on

an 11.40 left him vulnerable. Bolton stayed within striking distance on the tree with an .031, but gave up the stripe by .002, stopping the clocks with an 11.354 on an 11.32.

"The car was incredibly consistent once I realized it wasn't going to pick up," said Piatek. "The weather station was showing .04-.05 quick, but I found out against Lisa that it wasn't going to go that fast."

Piatek earned his way to the semifinal bye run by pushing Lee Norton's recently reconstructed V6 Firebird into a breakout, aided by an .014 to .052 holeshot.

"Norton surprised me, because I heard that it was his first time back out, with just a junkyard engine with a cam change!" he said. "Everyone there was a good threat."

On the bye, Piatek was near-perfect once again with an .003 light, before lifting early. "I had surprisingly good lights all day," he said. "I wish I could do that all the time!"

Stock rookie Adam Keir, who qualified his A/SA '70 Nova for the Tournament of Champions via a Sportsman Nationals win, denied Anthony Bertozzi in the semis. Keir took the Super Stock winner to task with an .016-initiated 10.340 (10.32) against Bertozzi's dead-on but late 10.745.

In the finals, Piatek grabbed the tree, .022 to .042, and ran a close 11.460 (11.45) to push Keir into a 10.289 (10.32) breakout.

"I got to meet the Keir family," said Piatek. "Everyone was very kind, and they talked about hitting a lot more IHRA races next year."

"I'd really like to thank Don and Carmen Dimeler for their help at the track, and their hospitality," concluded Piatek. "It made the rain that much more bearable."

In order to compete on the highest level, Piatek credits a long list of important supporters of his racing program, including Daytona State College, Holeshot Wheels, Amsoil Synthetics/The Lube Page, Larry Whitley at Eastern Performance Engines, J.W. Performance Transmissions, Bearden Oil/Sunoco Race Fuels, Ronnie Robinson Performance, Hoosier Tire, TTI Exhaust, Auto Meter, Harland Sharp, ROL Gaskets, Pioneer Performance, Volusia Drivetrain, Gary's Driveline, Ishihara-Johnson crank scrapers, and Al's Signs.



There are three ways to qualify for the Tournament of Champions, and Myron Piatek has managed to accomplish them all. At the President's Cup Nationals, Piatek, of Holly Hill, Florida, punched his ticket to Rockingham one more time by collecting the Stock Ironman. Piatek qualified his J/CM '75 Dodge Dart eighteenth.



Maryland's Adam Keir, of Dunkirk, was the No. 8 qualifier during preliminary action at Budds Creek. He went to the final and finished runner-up Sunday.



Anthony Bertozzi was looking to add a Stock Ironman to the one he picked up in Super Stock. He qualified in the No. 25 slot, and went to the semifinals.



Bill Hawk, of Manassas, Virginia, took his beautiful 428-powered '67 Shelby Mustang to the No. 1 qualifying spot.

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