

FIA EUROPEAN DRAG RACING CHAMPIONSHIP: 2010

Round Number: **FIA 2**

Event: **Sweden Internationals**

Location: **Tierp Arena, Sweden**

Date: **9-12 June 2011**

PREVIEW: FIA PRO MODIFIED

Santa Pod's rained-off Main Event may have proved inconclusive, but it has provided a few pointers towards the FIA Pro Modified show at Tierp Arena's inaugural Sweden Internationals two weekends later.

Most obviously, Michael Gullqvist is the man to beat. Watching the ex-R2B2 Camaro from on high in Santa Pod's race control is a heart-in-mouth experience. The car 'hunts' back and forth as it hammers up the strip, twisting and turning like a manic terrier desperate to slip its leash. Perhaps it thinks it's a Fuel Altered in disguise. It looks a terrifying ride, but neither Gullqvist nor his predecessor, Melanie Troxel, has ever shown much inclination to lift.

Hectic as it may seem, the car delivers the goods. Running into the flag-snapping headwind that blew all weekend before the rain arrived, Gullqvist's 6.085 at 234.83mph/377.92kph secured him low qualifier comfortably ahead of the Santa Pod field. Gullqvist did not attend Tierp's NDRS Nationals early last month but the performance figures turned on the virgin concrete by some of those who did, suggest that some record-battering might be in prospect.

So who might challenge Professor Gullqvist? With 31 entrants, there is no shortage of candidates. How about Bruno Bader, for instance?

The Swiss driver endured an unpleasant Main Event weekend. Heading for Santa Pod on a French autoroute in the middle of the night, one of Bader's truck's front tyres exploded, causing substantial bodywork damage, blowing out the vehicle's electrical systems and severely shocking Bader's lone crew companion sitting right above it. Lacking a spare, Bader had to transfer one of his twin rear wheels and jury-rig the electrics in the pitch dark while the shaken crewman tried to illuminate the rear of the trailer with a torch to ward off any passing vehicles that may have edged on to the hard shoulder. Then, at the track, the unfortunate crewman's back froze while he lay working under the car and he had to be boarded out and carted to hospital.

And still Bader managed to qualify second at 6.116, just .003 shy of his personal best. Some day Bader is going to win one of these races, and no one will say he hasn't earned it.

Bader's apart, this could be the Year of the Red Car. Adam Flamholc's and Andy Robinson's cars are now decked out in varying shades while Gullqvist's Camaro has

switched from burgundy to scarlet. Then there is Per Svedberg's gorgeous new, crimson Demon.

Pro Mod newcomer Svedberg impressed not only with the quality and appearance of his car and transporter, but with the quality of his performance too. The experienced Swedish Top Doorslammer racer arrived at Santa Pod with his Dodge – built, for a change, in Denmark – and an American Pro Mod legend, Scotty Cannon, accompanied by son Scott Jr., to tune it. At Tierp in May, Svedberg clocked 6.30/234/377 in his first full pass in the car and registered 6.1's on two of the three runs he made at the Main Event, good for fifth qualifying spot in his first FIA race.

Add Marco Maurischat and his German Corvette as a darkhorse, then take your pick of the potential red car winners.

Or could it be a green car that takes the trophy? Mats Eriksson still looks a little rusty – his 6.81 was only good enough for 13th at the Main Event – but we all know what he can do once he's back on song. Another, partially-green car made an intriguing FIA debut at the race when Norway's former Top Fuel pilot, Linda Thun Tønseth, launched a new career as Europe's first female FIA Pro Mod driver. Handling the ex-*Undertaker* Camaro which Urban Johansson (another victory candidate, of course) had bought from American racer Tommy Gray during the winter, Thun, who was unwell for much of the weekend, managed two 8-second, early-shutoff passes and looks to have an exciting future in the class.

Black cars are in with a chance – Johan Lindberg and Mikael Lindahl both have FIA championships to their names – and black, flamed trucks too – 'Fast Freddy' Fagerström pushed his hefty Chevy to a new speed PB at Tierp in May, an unbelievable 232.53mph/374.22kph. And how about psychedelic cars? Jan Gunnarsson's eye-popping Cadillac clocked an eye-popping 241.05mph/387.93kph PB at that same race. And cars serving as temporary homes? 'Mustang Man' Roger Johansson has his giant nitrous mill reclining in a Corvette chassis while he builds a new ponycar. It didn't prevent him running his own speed PB (231.25/372.16) at the NDRS Nationals.

That leaves just 17 other contenders to consider. Talk about being spoiled for choice. Pray for fine weather and Tierp's Pro Mod show won't disappoint.

Text: Robin Jackson