



Jimmy Prock (Robert Hight Crew Chief) Title Completes Resume

Jimmy Prock once was considered the best crew chief never to have won an NHRA championship. Now, the introspective 43-year-old with the go-for-the-jugular mentality may be the sport's best crew chief, period. At the very least, he is one of the best among the current crop of Austin Coil wannabes.

Coming off an NHRA Full Throttle championship with driver Robert "Top Gun" Hight, one that ended 18 years of title frustration in both the Top Fuel and Funny Car divisions, Prock no longer need address questions about his inability to win it all.

Now he can focus on fine-tuning the potent blue-and-white Auto Club Ford Mustang that he has transformed into the benchmark for Funny Car performance.

Although it uses a John Force Racing-developed Ford BOSS 500 engine for power, the 8,000 horsepower Ford has racked up numbers more worthy of rocket science. Thus the nickname, "Prock Rocket."

In fact, it has carried Hight to the quickest times in Funny Car history – 4.636 seconds through the standard quarter mile; 4.006 at the new 1,000 foot distance at which races have been contested since the June, 2008 death of veteran Scott Kalitta.

Ironically, Prock's championship breakthrough came in a season in which he admittedly struggled more than he has in his entire career. Trying to work through mechanical issues resulting from another detour from conventional thinking, he almost didn't get his car in the playoffs. Once he did, it was lights out.

A sterling 15-3 record in the races comprising the Countdown made the frustrating start to last season seem like little more than a bad dream. It also provided a Hollywood ending to what previously was a work-in-progress. Before winning the title, Prock twice had settled for second place by less than one racing round and on both occasions, the difference maker was a race not run.

Prock finished second with Top Fuel driver Cory McClenathan in 1992, losing the title by nine points when the team opted NOT to attend the race in Montreal, Canada. In 2007, his third year with Hight, the two were second by 19 points in a season in which they bowed out of the O'Reilly Spring Nationals at Houston, Texas, in the wake of teammate Eric Medlen's fatal accident.

Prock has demonstrated remarkable consistency since he accepted his first crew chief job in 1991. Over 19 seasons, he never has failed to put his driver in the Top 10. Furthermore, he has won multiple tour events for 14 consecutive seasons.



While Prock hadn't won a championship before last season, since he arrived at JFR in 2001 he has nurtured a reputation for winning big races based largely on his success in the Mac Tools U.S. Nationals at Indianapolis, Ind., drag racing's equivalent of NASCAR's Daytona 500. He first won that race in 2004 with Densham and now has put Hight in the finals four straight years with wins in 2006 and 2008.

It is the partnership with Hight that excites him the most, however. It's an alliance that works because, as a former crewman, Hight can communicate with him on a purely mechanical level better than any of his previous drivers. The downside was supposed to have been that the 40-year-old Hight never had driven competitively, but that downside apparently was overstated.

Prock's success should have surprised no one. After all, he started going to the races with his dad when he was only 11. It wasn't until the family moved to California, however, that he decided to make his career in the sport. Working with veteran Ronnie Swearingen, he helped put independent Funny Car driver John Martin in two finals before a 1989 bout with diabetes almost ended his career – and his life.

"I didn't know what I had and we just kept going," Prock recalled. "I just kept getting sicker and finally I went to the doctor. We were in Phoenix. I really couldn't even function. When I came home, the doctor looked at me and just put me right in the hospital. They put IVs right in me. They said I was about ready to go into a coma."

Today, he manages the situation through diet and insulin shots. Once his health stabilized, Prock went to work with Dick LaHaie, from whom he learned the dragster business, and in 1991 he hooked up with Cory Mac. When sponsorship became a problem for McClenathan, Prock moved to Amato's where he remained until the end of the 2000 season. Now, he's a "Funny Car guy" again, but nobody seems to be laughing – except, maybe, Force and Hight.

