

For Immediate Release

Sept. 15, 2011

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Norwegian Hanssen secures first European title with runner-up in Santa Pod

SANTA POD, England – In just his third year of FIA Top Methanol Dragster competition, Norwegian Fisherman Fred Hanssen secured his first European Championship with a runner-up finish at this past weekend's European Finals at Santa Pod Raceway in England. Hanssen and his Islanders Black & White team locked up the title when his closest opponent, former five-time European Champion Dave Wilson smoked the tires in round one, while Hanssen advanced.

Hanssen, 43, of Afjord, Norway, had battled Wilson all season long. After rain ended the season-opening Main Event at Santa Pod in May, Hanssen scored his first professional win by taking out Wilson at the next event, the Sweden Internationals in June. He then kept the roll going by taking another win over Wilson at the Nitro Nationals in Finland. Wilson was able to strike back last month at the NitrOlympx in Germany, when Hanssen had a clutch linkage bolt bend in the first round, leading to an early-exit, while Wilson advanced to another final. Heading into the final event at Santa Pod, Wilson held a slim nine point advantage, meaning Hanssen would need to go one round more than Wilson or win the event to over take him.



Hanssen fired the first shot in his blown alcohol dragster tuned by American Will Hanna, with a 5.409 second elapsed time at 264.08 mph in Friday's first session that would put him in the top qualifying position, a spot he would not relinquish. He backed that time up with a 5.402

second blast Saturday night that would stand for low elapsed time of the event. Meanwhile, the European record holder Wilson qualified with an off-pace 5.522 to place him fifth. With qualifying points tabulated, that put Hanssen and Wilson in a dead tie going into the first round, if Hanssen held on to the low e.t. points.

Wilson would face off with Hanssen's fellow Islanders Drag Racing teammate Paul Ingar Udtian as the first pair of round one. Wilson went up in smoke at the launch, handing the win to Udtian. Hanssen, who was last pair of the round now just needed to defeat Oliver Azzopardi, a rookie driver from Malta. Azzopardi had problems with his engine and was forced to shut off, while Hanssen clinched the championship with a 5.408 at 264.20 mph.

Hanssen then squared off against his teammate Udtian in the semifinal round. Udtian went up in smoke while Hanssen scored the win with a tire-shaking 5.52 at 259 mph. In the finals, a broken parachute mount deployed a parachute prematurely, allowing out-going European Champion Timo Habermann to collect the victory.

"I am very pleased to have reached the goal of a European champion," said Hanssen. "This is great for a fisherman from Afjord, but it has cost a lot of hard work. Our crew has done such a great job this year, Will Hanna the Crew Chief, Per Skjoelberg, Ingvald Fredagsvik, Thore Bakken, Howie Main, Joseph Satterfield and Chris Foster; without them, this would not have happened. Also, without the support of our sponsors Brad Penn Oil – Tore Grannegen, Norwegian Distributor, Fosen Tools, VSP, Hansson Fishing A/S, VP Racing Fuels, Victory Valves and RS Bipleie, this would not be possible. It is very gratifying to be able to reward all of their hard work and support with this Championship."

Rather than flying home to celebrate, Hanssen flew back to Norway, where his fishing ship was waiting for him to go back out to sea, where he will be until November.



Will Hanna and Fred Hanssen