

## **FIA EUROPEAN DRAG RACING CHAMPIONSHIP: 2010**

Round Number: **FIA 3**

Event: **FHRA Niro Nationals**

Location: **Alastaro, Finland**

Date: **30 June – 3 July 2011**

---

### **PREVIEW: FIA PRO MODIFIED**

When picking likely winners for a Pro Mod preview, one's easy option is to focus on the last race's heavy hitters. At Tierp, five racers delivered 6.0's in qualifying and two of them dipped into the 5.9's during eliminations. Yet the eventual winner, Bruno Bader, was not among them.

Bader barely scraped into the top half of the field, just 0.0007sec ahead of ninth qualifier Jan Gunnarsson. Despite twice achieving personal-best speeds on the Tierp concrete followed by a personal-best ET while winning the final, Bader's 6.103 still leaves him only ninth-quickest on the Alastaro entry list. So what are the Swiss ace's chances of doing the double with back-to-back race wins? Not bad at all, most observers would agree. Barring a *tour de force* performance on the scale of last year's Alastaro victory by Michael Gullqvist, few of this year's entries can be discounted in advance. Fourteen of them have ducked under 6.2 seconds at one time or another.

At Alastaro, though, Gullqvist can hardly avoid the mantle of favourite. After all, he has won here for the past two years. Moreover, his 5.911sec/395.52kph/245.76mph clocking on the way to last year's victory still stands as Europe's quickest, fastest Pro Mod pass by some margin, despite Tierp's recent raft of fine performances, and he holds Low ET of the Meet honours from both this season's races to date. Since Pro Mod entered the FIA Championship in 2006, Gullqvist has collected five victories, more than double the tally of any other competitor. Only rain-outs (eight) feature more frequently in the results.

Of the others in Tierp's quick five, Adam Flamholc (European ET record-holder – Gullqvist's 5.91 was not backed up), Mats Eriksson and Johan Lindberg have won before and could certainly win again. The new name in the hierarchy, though hardly the new kid on the block, is Marc Meihuizen. At Tierp, the Dutch star ventured into the six-flat zone for the first time in competition. His previous 6.0, achieved in a test session before last year's Main Event, blew the motor badly enough to put him out for much of the 2010 season. Now that his Andy Robinson-built Firebird is starting to run the numbers to match its handsome looks, Meihuizen can justifiably hope to improve on the solitary runner-up finish that currently decorates his FIA career.

Talking of Andy Robinson, the sole British driver on the European tour is one of two class veterans perhaps overdue for a win. The other is Urban Johansson. In their time, both racers have more or less done it all. Johansson was the inaugural FIA Pro

Mod champion in 2006 and has two wins to his credit. Last year at Mantorp, he was looking the class of the field when rain stopped play. Robinson has twice come within a whisker of the crown and scored a magisterial victory at 2009's Main Event. If Johansson is not distracted by the effort of fielding a two-car team, and if Robinson can coax one last gasp from his venerable Studebaker in its retirement year, both can expect to prosper.

Maybe Mikael Lindahl will trump the lot of them. This year the Lindahl twins have their own distraction, in the form of the turbo car they are building, but it didn't stop them clocking the year's fastest terminal speed so far, 392.44/243.85, at Tierp, then going on to reach the semi-final in their familiar, supercharged Camaro. And for a real darkhorse pick, how about Robert Joosten? At last the Dutchman is starting to wring some presentable performances from his American-built Camaro, so promising in its US shakedown runs, so perplexing since its arrival in Europe. Joosten ran a personal-best speed (375.00/233.01) at Tierp, though he missed the cut by one place. There are currently 20 entrants at Alastaro, following Marco Maurischat's withdrawal. Joosten will certainly hope to be among the 16 racing on Sunday. After that, anything can happen.

One last thing: if Bruno Bader does win again, it will be a small piece of recent FIA Pro Mod history. No one has managed to win two in a row since 2006.

Text: Robin Jackson