

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BRISTOL, Tenn. -- Blake Alexander racing his Gates/Auto Service Plus Nitro Funny Car at Bristol this weekend is the crescendo of a childhood dream. This is where it all started in Junior Dragster for Blake and when he straps in to the 8000 horsepower Paul Smith racing Monte Carlo, his dream of becoming a professional NHRA Funny Car driver at Bristol will be fulfilled.

It started early in life for Blake, the desire to be a race driver. When he was a toddler, Blake would pretend he was sponsored by companies like Valvoline (which he is now). Playing with his Hot Wheels funny cars of John Force, Chuck Etchells, and Al Hoffman, the dream was far out. The dream persisted and Blake saved his chore, birthday, and Christmas money from age 4 to get his first ride in a Junior Dragster at 11.

Blake won his first event at age 12 amongst 400 other competitors at the Mike Bos Nationals held at Bristol. Blake's solid 9.50 ET's in the 1/8<sup>th</sup> mile brought home the trophy. Mike Bos and his son's Mike Jr and Jimmy would become instrumental in Blake's progression after building his next car.

With the NHRA's Junior Drag Racing League entering its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Blake looks back upon his time in the class that was one of the building blocks of his early career.

"I was lucky to be one of the kids who got the opportunity to learn the basics of drag racing before getting into a big car. You learn by making mistakes in a racecar, just like anything in life. I learned how to stage, cut a light, drive the top end, and how to conduct myself in a sportsmanlike manner on and off the track. I still consider myself very lucky to have the opportunity that I worked for, along with the support of my family," Blake said.

This weekend will mark Blake's return to the place where the dream began, to one day be blasting through Thunder Valley in a nitro-breathing Funny Car. The reality still hasn't set in that he is living that dream.

"From the time that I started racing at age 11 until I was probably around 22, I didn't think that I would be doing this at 23. I'm really enjoying living out the dream, but at the same time, I'm probably not going to recognize what's happening until I look back at it at the end of the season," said the Virginia resident.

When the Gates/Auto Service Plus Funny Car propels Blake down the track at Thunder Valley, you can't help but think about other kids playing with toy cars dreaming of becoming a Funny Car Driver and that the little kid in the Valvoline hat with a big dream has come full circle!

About Gates:

Gates Corporation ([gates.com](http://gates.com)) is one of the world's leading manufacturers of industrial

and automotive products, systems and components with operations in 30 countries. Gates maintains sales and marketing operations in every major industrial and automotive market, including North and South America, Europe, Asia, Australia and the Middle East.

Gates is part of the Industrial & Automotive group of Tomkins Ltd., which is owned by a consortium comprising Onex Corporation and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board. Tomkins enjoys strong market positions and technical leadership across all of its business activities and owns some of the best-known brands in their respective markets.

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Blake Alexander Racing is a company that was started and maintained by nitro funny car driver Blake Alexander while in college. Blake worked his way up from Jr. Dragsters through the competitive sportsman ranks, now achieving his goal of driving a professional Nitro Funny Car. Through his efforts on and off the track, Blake secures corporate sponsorships and works actively with each supporter to activate and stimulate their respective brands from market to market. Blake Alexander drives for iconic master tuner Paul Smith, who owns and operates Paul Smith Racing out of Boynton Beach, Florida.

Companies that support Blake Alexander Racing include: Auto Service Plus, Gates Rubber Company, Exide Batteries, Tenneco Automotive, Valvoline, Standard Motor Products, and Pro Jack Race Car Stands.

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