

Is Championship Drag Racing just a hobby or an entertainment business?

I think it is both. There are levels for both to exist. Actually both need each other. Almost everybody starts in drag racing as a hobby because they are interested in some facet of drag racing. It could be the mechanical side of it or the driving side of it or just taking neat pictures.

Today making a living just drag racing in Australia is difficult since we need more infrastructures to support more racing, which would support more events which would provide more income opportunities for racers.

There is a direct linkage between the level of drag racing and how much television coverage we can get. The more television, the more sponsors, the more races, the more racers can be supported. It is simple, TV equals money.

Drag racing in Australia today is where it was in the US before cable TV became almost universal and there were 60-100 channels to fill up with something. Once you have that many channels you have to fill it so you have shopping channels, the kids channels, the old movie channels, and the sports channels some of them concentrating on just auto racing.

Really, we humans are an odd bunch, if you put it on the air someone will watch it. If someone watches it then it is worth money, if it worth money, then professional drag racers deserve their slice of the pie.

Remember, the more the promoters have to pay the professionals to try to cover the astronomical costs of running a professional car, the less the promoters have to "trickle down" to the sportsman racers. Therefore cable TV will increase everybody's financial compensation.

My personal feelings on TV here is irrelevant what is reverent is that TV equals money. The more that cable television grows the more professional drag racing will grow. It happened in the US and it will happen here. The professionals who aggressively promote themselves will reap the greatest rewards.

Paid crews, paid crew chiefs with bonus packages, media and marketing staff, this is the future of professional drag racing in Australia. Grow or die there is no middle ground. When all this happens why should the professionals not get paid, they are smart and have worked hard to learn what they know.

Most importantly if everybody else in drag racing, television, race promoters, manufacturers, are making money from drag racing why not the professional drag racers. If the professionals pull the crowds in the gate why not reward them for doing so. They cannot do this out of their pocket. There is a limit to how much "win" money that the promoters can put up. ANDRA and the promoters can better support the professional racers by assisting them in getting sponsors who receive advertising in exchange for the payment to the racer.

NASCAR racing in the US does a very good job of helping assist the professional racer gets a sponsor as they realize the more the sponsor "kicks the can" the less "win" money NASCAR has to put up so they can put more money into expanding the facility, which looks more professional to the sponsor.

If you take a potential sponsor to a dirty, disorganized race track with bad lights it only confirms the stereotype a lot of people have about drag racing. A clean well-lit organized operation makes the sponsor feel like he is getting his money worth, because he is getting his moneys worth. You cannot lure big dollar sponsors with a ten-cent facility.

You can still have your sportsman level of drag racing for the hobby racer or the aspiring professional racer. As a matter of fact we need this level of racing it is very important for ANDRA and the race promoters to support the sportsman racer for all the obvious reasons.

It will be the sportsman racer who will keep the smaller tracks profitable and most of the new young professionals will start as sportsman racers.

As a professional entertainment business called Championship Drag Racing whether we are engine builders, transmission builders, race car builders wheel and tire sellers, ticket takers, track prep crew, or track announcers, everybody, we all have a responsibility to make Championship Drag Racing the best entertainment value for the paying public that we can because if we don't they will go to the football or to the movies or stay home and rent a video. Yes even the local video store is our entertainment competition and if we make Championship Drag Racing not entertaining or too expensive watch or too hard to get out of the parking lot after the show they just won't come back.

As every one in business knows you pay a lot of money in advertising to get new customers to show up and you don't start making money until they return two or three times.... and bring friends. Drag racing in Australia can double in size from what it is now and it will if we do the correct things. This will benefit everyone involved in this business from the suppliers to the racers to the promoters. Personally I am really looking forward to being involved in the explosive growth of drag racing in Australia in the next 5 - 10 years. I hope we meet in the bank queue making deposits, not applying for an extension on the overdraft.