

Latest Hawley Graduate Joins the 200 MPH Club in New Top Dragster Program

Southern California resident Erik Harris has been a longtime fan of drag racing and fast cars. Just last March, he was able to take being an avid fan one step further and earn his NHRA Super Comp license by attending one of Frank Hawley's Drag Racing School Super Classes in Las Vegas.

"I attended Frank's school basically just as a spectator, just because I wanted to learn more about drag racing," said Harris, who is a private corporate pilot. "The Super Class was everything that Paul [Shields] explained to me before I signed up. It was just an awesome two day course, it delivered everything and even more than I expected."

"I was very happy to hear that Frank was now offering a Top Dragster course," he continued. "I think I found out about the new class in January and it was like a birthday present. I received the email about the new Top Dragster course and I was on the phone with Paul the next day."

Each student has their own reason for attending Frank Hawley's Drag Racing School, for Harris it was a little different than others.

"I told Frank that I wasn't interested in getting my own car," Erik pointed out. "I figured getting into the school's Top Dragster would be the quickest I would go and it would not only be fun, but help me learn a little more about all the cars, the classes and all what the drivers have to do, the thought process and of course what it feels like during the launch."

Just a little over a year since Harris first earned his Super Comp license, he made the cross-country trip to Florida and Gainesville Raceway to take on his next adventure at Frank Hawley's Drag Racing School. Before getting behind the wheel of the school's Top Dragster, Harris decided to first make a few laps in one of the Super Comp dragsters, as a refresher.

"I hadn't driven a [race] car in over a year," said Harris of his choice to do some warm-up passes in the other car. "I had restudied the procedures for the Super Comp car, made those runs and then jumped over to the Top Dragster. That was a big step up."

"I really enjoyed it," he continued. "Working closely with Frank was great. Jimmy [Montgomery] and Matt [Milano] were my pit crew and they are just fantastic guys."

As his Top Dragster course progressed, Harris learned to master the new-to-him procedures required to run the speed and ET's needed to earn his NHRA 3A competition license, one of them being the use of parachutes. "It was kind of surreal," he said. "When you throw the chutes it takes a moment for them to hit and to go from a dead stop to 200 MPH, then pull the chutes and feel them hit and slow you down, well it was just a really neat experience. Man verses machine, I guess is how I would put it."



Being a pilot, reaching high speeds in the air is nothing new for Harris, but the sensation of doing so on the ground in such a minuscule amount of time still has him smiling from ear-to-ear.

“During the course, I wasn’t aware of the speeds or the ET’s I was obtaining in the Top Dragster,” he reflected. “I didn’t really want to know at that point or get psyched out about it. When Frank handed me my time slips at the end of the course, I was very-very surprised that I hit two-hundred. [6.93 @ 203] As a driver, that kind of thing, going two-hundred plus and a sub-seven second run is a big milestone. It’s great to be able to experience that.”

“Just in the first eighth-mile I was going one-sixty-three [mph], I mean just in the first four and a half seconds,” he pointed out. “Until that first eighth-mile pass in the school’s Top Dragster, I had never gone that fast in a car period. When you look at the stats and compress all of the information, you get a real appreciation for how quick the Top Dragster really is.”

“I had a chance to speak to Frank a little about aviation and the similarities between race car driving and flying jets,” he said. “The staying calm, not rushing procedures and so on.”

Harris is very happy that he chose to take part in Hawley’s Super Class first and suggests that other drivers do the same. “It’s not natural for a human being to be blasted off to two-hundred MPH, Frank’s classroom lectures during the Super Class really help with focusing and mental discipline. I think even for experienced racers, they should never short change themselves on any lecture that Frank Hawley’s giving.”

While Harris’ career keeps him very busy flying overseas and no plans for a dragster of his own, the newly licensed NHRA Top Dragster driver is already planning a return to Hawley’s school in Gainesville, Florida in 2012. “I want to go back and do it again, just make a vacation out of it,” he smiled. “The whole experience was fantastic from driving the car to working with Jimmy and Matt and of course, training with Frank Hawley.”

For more information on Frank Hawley’s Drag Racing School’s Top Dragster program, visit www.frankhawley.com, call 866-480-7223 (Outside the US 678-804-8835) also on Facebook and YouTube. In addition to Top Dragster, classes are also offered in Super Comp, Super Gas, Top Sportsman, Top Alcohol Dragster, Top Alcohol Funny Car, and Pro Stock Motorcycle along with Bring Your Own Car Programs.