

Top Alcohol Funny Car driver Chris Foster remembers this feeling. As he treks down from his home base in Davenport, Iowa, to finish out the rain-delayed South Central Division race in Houston, he is already assured the Division 3 championship and is simply looking to sink himself further into the top 10 in the national standings.

Guaranteed a runner-up or better finish as he returns to Royal Purple Raceway in possession of a bye run into the last act, Foster's scorecard for the season will include a final round appearance in each of the five possible claimed points meets, and he is hoping to cash out with win No. 3 for the year at the conclusion of the event. He hasn't had this much success since, well, the last time he won the Division title and finished in the top 10 nationally in 2009.

"This season started out better than I expected," said Foster. "We won Houston, got that win in the bank right away, and it just rolled from there. Our 2009 championship year was the first year [crew chief] Will Hanna was with us, and I thought that was a dream season. I said to myself, 'Boy, it can't get any better than this.' Then we finished second in Division 4 in 2010 and I was disappointed, but the way we started out this year, I thought wow, we're back, and we're going to take off with this championship. And that's exactly what we did."



Although Foster stumbled briefly after that stellar season-debut, he was back in charge with a victory at a home race in Norwalk. A runner up in Chicago soon followed, and then another final-round in Columbus. By the time the trucks pulled out of the North Central region's last meet of the year in Bowling Green in late August, Foster had sewn up the D3 title.

"It's been quite a season," said Foster. "We ran a career best this year in Chicago, a 5.57, and to win our second championship is great. It was different, though; the 2009 championship was down to the wire, and it was pretty exciting to go all the way to the last race and have to win it. But this year, to be up in front and lead points for the majority of the season and take control of it, it was just one big high all the way."

Foster and crew.
Photo copyright 2011 Robert Grice

of seven, when he trailed his dad, John Foster, to the races as he worked with then-partner Stan Stripe (now the commander of a blown alcohol dragster in Division 2 territory) on a Comp Eliminator car.

Foster's recent success was a long-time coming. He first got the itch to drive a racecar at the age

In 1985, when Foster was just 15 years old, he strapped into the racecar for the first time. That A/Dragster that his dad and Stripe had went 7.50s at 185 mph; what better place to cut teeth for a future Top Alcohol Funny Car beast-tamer?

"I always wanted to drive Funny Car," said Foster. "That's been the urge the whole time, and driving that thing is very challenging, but it's also very rewarding. It's an adrenaline rush - it's unbelievable in that car, and I try to stay pretty calm and keep a cool and clear head, but I'm an adrenaline junkie. I have my moments."

After racing in the Comp car for a season, Foster took half a decade off to finish school, and upon his return to the dragstrip he was able to indulge his intense desire to drive an alcohol Funny Car. He and his dad tried out bracket racing in the Midwest Funny Car Association for a couple of years and then went to UDRA, where they won the 2000 championship. They soon moved from UDRA into IHRA and competed for a brief time before Foster decided he wanted to step up one more level and race NHRA, and there he found his home.

Foster gives a lot of credit to the partnership with Hanna for the true transition of their program. He calls the year Hanna came on board their "best recorded year," and recalls meeting his tuner at an IHRA race in San Antonio.



**This year's trip to Route 66 Raceway produced a career best 5.57.
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"After that, we were at Noble, Okla., at a division race, and we talked a little bit. The next week, he called up and we threw some things together. He suggested that we try this for a year, and my dad and I were on board so we put Will to work. Maybe it's the other way around, though; maybe Will put us to work. I'm not sure which way that went, actually," he laughed.

Hanna, whose busy schedule also includes serving as the crew chief on the FIA European Circuit Top Methanol dragster that was driven to the championship this year by Fred Hanssen, is aided on Foster's team by Foster's dad, John, and also his step-father, Dwight Baxter. The two are tasked with maintaining everything behind the motorplate.

**In Chicago in 2001.
Photo copyright 2011 Auto Imagery, Inc.**

very content with racing the alcohol Funny Car because it lends to a family atmosphere.

Some people may find it strange that Foster's dad and step-dad work together side-by-side throughout the year, but everyone in their pit gets along fantastically. Although Foster would certainly not turn down a ride in a fuel car, he is

"I would love to do it, but financially, I know where my limitations are," he said. "I'm content that this is a family-oriented team. It isn't very often that you have something like this where we all have such a close relationship. You step up to a fuel team, and I know that goes away."

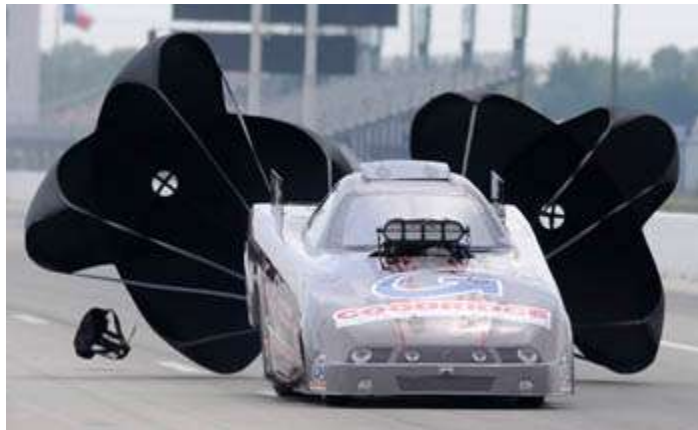
Foster's family also includes wife Deanna, three daughters and a son. The family is supportive and attends races whenever possible, but for the most part it's just the guys on the road. They make 12 races a year to meet the quotas, and Foster periodically accompanies Hanna on trips across the ocean to work on the FIA car.

Thankfully, he has a very forgiving job at Eastern Iowa Tire as a mechanic, and the second mechanic in the shop is gracious with his time and schedules vacations and time off around Foster's racing schedule.

"You couldn't ask for a better employer, allowing me to take off as much time as I do," said Foster. "And I'd like to thank Gary Seibel for everything he does to work around my race schedule. My work is a big part of helping us succeed."



**Manzo was in the other lane for Foster's first national final, Norwalk 2009.
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**Foster deploys the chutes.
Photo copyright 2011 Robert Grice**

Foster also thanked his wife, Deanna, and each of his kids for supporting him even though he is gone so much of the time. Thanks also go out to his dad and step dad, as well as Hanna, and he offered gratitude towards all of his sponsors, including Goodridge Hose & Fittings, RBS Superchargers, Manton Engineering, Motorsports Unlimited, Track Tamer Engines in Dewitt, Iowa and Forbes Construction.

As the season slows to a halt for Foster following the conclusion of the event in Houston, the focus turns to the 2012 season of Lucas Oil Series drag racing. Although they haven't had consistently prosperous outings in national event competition this year, Foster would like to improve upon that in the future. The braintrust recently uncovered a few issues with the car and are confident that they'll find their way back to the final round at the big show, a place they haven't visited since the 2009 event in Norwalk.

"And hopefully, we'll bring our divisional win total up to six this weekend," said Foster, who garnered three of his five divisional wins in 2009 and the other two this season.

"I just love this to death, and we've worked constantly on this car. We work on the race operation every single day of the year; there is always something going on. And it's all worth it."

