JOHN R. GRAY DAY
Son and daughter deliver Pitch Energy team to Artesia as hometown provides a hero’s welcome for Gray family

ARTESIA, N.M. (April 12, 2013) – When Thomas Wolfe wrote the novel “You Can’t Go Home Again” more than 70 years ago, he couldn’t have known the impact the late John R. Gray and Johnny Gray would have on people in his hometown of Artesia, N.M.

Johnny, his wife, Terry, and sister, Terry Chandler, led Don Schumacher Racing’s Pitch Energy Funny Car team to a layover in the southern New Mexico hamlet on Wednesday on the team’s return to DSR headquarters near Indianapolis after last weekend’s NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series event near Las Vegas.

It was designated “John R. Gray Day” as part of the family’s season-long salute to the late patriarch, John R. Gray, a legendary oilman who changed the lives of countless families in a tradition carried on by his son, who took over Marbob Corp. and his dad’s Pitch Energy business interests.

“People say they had the best dad, but they’re all wrong ’cause I had the best dad,” Gray has often said.
With the name “Pitch Energy” – a family business the late Gray named after his favorite card game Pitch – on the Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car bodies with likenesses of John R. on rear quarter panels is how Gray decided to bid his farewell to competing full-time on the NHRA drag racing circuit.

So Gray and the nine-member Pitch Energy crew, both 18-wheel transporters and tow vehicle turned south at Albuquerque for Artesia instead of continuing east.

It was a very, very special day for the Gray family and Artesia that turned out in force to visit with the Grays and see Johnny’s 320-mph Dodge that rested in the shadow of a massive statue of John R. and his original partner, Mack Chase, that is part of Downtown Artesia’s Monument Park that honors the local heroes of the oil drilling industry.

John R. was 71 when he died on Oct. 28, 2001.

Countless friends who attended John R. Gray Day shared personal contributions made by the Grays to the local oil industry, their generosity and a continued commitment to Artesia and nearby Carlsbad communities.

Case in point: DSR and Gray’s former sponsor Service Central donated enough souvenir shirts and diecasts to raise more than $2,000 for the Grammy’s House family shelter.

A steady crowd of over 500 kept Gray busy signing shirts, diecasts and autograph cards for nearly the full three hours of the display. When it ended at 6 p.m., the Pitch Energy group headed for Hotel Artesia for a reception attended mostly by former Marbob employees.

“Heck, all these folks just showed up because they heard I’d give ‘em two free drink coupons,” he joked of his nearly 100 reception guests.

“Nah, they’re all good people. I love all of ‘em. About two-thirds worked for us at some time. They were always extremely loyal to me and my dad, and I’ll always be loyal to them.”

Gray and the Pitch Energy team hoped to ride into Artesia on a two-event winning streak after winning four weeks ago at Gainesville, Fla. But after recovering from a body-destroying explosion on Friday, they rallied to qualify No. 4 and advanced to the second round when the Dodge lost traction against Cruz Pedregon, who won the race and eventually the event title.
The team heads to Concord, N.C., and the Four-Wide Nationals April 19-21 and will be ranked second in points to Courtney Force, who advanced to the final round where she lost to Pedregon.

**Schumacher tops Brown for No. 201, points lead**

Tony Schumacher and the U.S. Army team celebrated crew chief Mike Green’s birthday on Sunday in Las Vegas by winning the NHRA SummitRacing.com Nationals title when it beat DSR teammate Antron Brown in the championship round.

Schumacher and the Army team produced the most consistent Top Fuel dragster on a tricky track and season’s first event with temperatures in the 80s for most of the weekend. Even though the 71st title of his career enabled Schumacher to take the points lead away from Brown and the Matco Tools team, he would have preferred to win the previous event to give his dad and team owner the 200th title in DSR history.

But he still was happy to get No. 201.

“Winning always makes me happy,” said Schumacher following his second win of the season and seventh at The Strip at Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

“It was really gratifying to get this win for (Green). He leads our nine-man U.S. Army team and those guys work incredibly hard to put us in position to win.

“We know when we race DSR cars that they are the hardest ones to beat,” said Schumacher, following his 122nd career final-round appearance. “They are great cars. Those teams make us do a better job. It’s a little more gratifying when we beat them, because we are constantly compared to one another.

“The other cool thing about today was that I got to race against three canopy cars (Brittany Force, Spencer Massey and Brown). That’s phenomenal.

“I have to thank my dad, Mike Green and all of the other people that worked so hard to build us a safer car. As the driver, I really appreciate knowing that we can go as fast as we do and be as safe as possible.”

**NHRA vs. NASCAR DRIVERS SOFTBALL SHOWDOWN**

Don Schumacher Racing drivers Antron Brown, Matt Hagan, Tony Schumacher and Ron Capps will join other NHRA stars playing NASCAR drivers in a charity slow-pitch softball game at 7 p.m. Wednesday before the NHRA Four-Wide Nationals at Charlotte Motor Speedway’s zMAX Dragway in Concord, N.C.

The game will be played at CMC-Northeast Stadium at Kannapolis, N.C.

Other NHRA drivers planning to play include Brandon Bernstein, Courtney Force, Del Worsham, Chad Head, JR Todd, Shawn Langdon, Clay Millican and Bob Vandergriff, who is the a brainchild behind the game that will raise money for the Armed Forces Foundation and Healthcare of Atlanta.

The NASCAR team includes: Martin Truex Jr., Clint Bowyer, Kasey Kahne, Matt Kenseth, Michael Waltrip,
Darrell Waltrip, David Ragan, Brad Sweet, Parker Kligerman and Kurt Busch, who is working with Vandergriff to organize the game.

The event begins at 5 p.m. with a one-hour autograph session, followed by one hour of on-field practice before the first pitch. Darrell Hardwood and The CWB will play a concert after the game.

Tickets are $20 for reserved seats and $15 for general admission, and can be ordered at IntimidatorsBaseball.com/nhra.

**NEXT EVENT:** April 19-21, NHRA Four-Wide Nationals, zMAX Dragway, Concord, N.C.

**NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series**

(Standings after 4 of 24 events; DSR drivers in BOLD/CAPS)

**TOP FUEL**

1. TONY SCHUMACHER, 386
2. ANTRON BROWN, 372
3. SPENCER MASSEY, 250
4. Shawn Langdon, 244
5. Clay Millican, 225
6. Doug Kalitta, 221
7. Khalid alBalooshi, 217
8. Morgan Lucas, 214
9. David Grubnic, 195
10. Brandon Bernstein, 177

**Event winners:** Shawn Langdon, TONY SCHUMACHER, ANTRON BROWN, SCHUMACHER.

**FUNNY CAR**

1. Courtney Force, 315
2. JOHNNY GRAY, 301
3. Cruz Pedregon, 298
4. MATT HAGAN, 284
5. RON CAPPS, 277
6. Del Worsham, 223
7. Robert Hight, 220
8. JACK BECKMAN, 206
9. Bob Tasca III, 187
10. Alexis DeJoria, 190

**Event winners:** Courtney Force, RON CAPPS, JOHNNY GRAY, Cruz Pedregon

**About Don Schumacher Racing**


DSR has won 201 NHRA national event titles and 11 world championships.
Follow Don Schumacher Racing at ShoeRacing.com, on Twitter at @shoeracing and Facebook.com/shoeracing.

Don Schumacher Racing
ShoeRacing.com
(317) 358-0356

Jeff Wolf
wolfj@shoeracing.com - (702) 524-1368, cell

Leah Vaughn
vaughnl@shoeracing.com - (618) 516-1988, cell

- 201 -