

# Never too old for first-time thrill

Fans drop hundreds of dollars at National Hot Rod Association national events in hopes of seeing something special – something spectacular – performed by the circuit’s star professional drag racers.

TODD MILLES; Staff writer

Published: 07/11/10 12:05 am

## **73-year-old Jim Cunningham got through to eliminations.**

Who?

Just a guy with unlimited persistence.

The Crownsville, Md., driver first tried Pro Stock in 1986. He did not make it out of qualifying until Saturday – a span of 64 NHRA events he had missed the 16-car show.

“We finally made it,” he said. Only minutes earlier, he had fielded congratulatory phone calls from his family, including his wife, Gloria.

“My wife is behind me. My kids are behind me. I have a great family.”

Cunningham – who owns Capital Raceway drag strip and mostly races on the East Coast – wasn’t planning to head out on the NHRA’s “western swing.” He’d done it only once before, in 2005.

“But my wife looked at me when I told her I wasn’t coming, she said, ‘Why aren’t you going? Get your butt on the road and go,’” Cunningham said. “That is why we’re here.”

Cunningham had a 6.741 ET Friday morning to hold the 16th qualifying spot, and had to wait to see if Erica Enders could bump him out.

Enders’ car made it barely 50 feet down the track before slowing, securing Cunningham’s spot.

Now, the oldest driver to make a Pro Stock field faces top qualifier Edwards in the first round. Anything is possible.

Read more: <http://www.thenewstribune.com/2010/07/11/1259820/never-too-old-for-first-time-thrill.html#ixzz11bn5A2S0>