

BIOGRAPHY

Steve Torrence

**OWNER/DRIVER: Torrence Racing Top Fuel Dragster
2018 NHRA MELLO YELLO TOP FUEL WORLD CHAMPION**

Steve Torrence's rise to the pinnacle of drag racing success is one of the great Horatio Alger moments in American motorsports.

Diagnosed with Hodgkins lymphoma as a teenager, he underwent months of radiation and chemotherapy treatment before emerging cancer free and ready to make the most of his second chance.

The experience, which he identifies as "the biggest race I've ever won," completely changed his perspective, spawning the laser focus that fueled his later success both on and off the track.

Incredibly, 15 years after emerging from cancer treatment and just three days before he was to compete in a Mello Yello tour event in Norwalk, Ohio, he again was reminded of the fragile nature of our existence when he suffered a heart attack at the conclusion of a particularly strenuous workout.

Undaunted, the one time black belt in taekwondo returned to competition 16 days later and ultimately finished third in the 2016 driver standings, a performance that would serve as a springboard to even greater success the next two years.

After losing the 2017 championship on the final day of the season, an outcome that likely was sealed weeks earlier when his primary race car was destroyed in a 300 mph crash at the Texas Motorplex, the 35-year-old left nothing to chance in 2018.

In addition to becoming the first driver ever to win NHRA series titles in both the Fuel and Alcohol divisions (he was the Top Alcohol Dragster Champion in 2005), he etched his name in NHRA history as the only driver in any discipline to win all six playoff races comprising the Countdown to the Championship.

That's a feat akin to the Houston Astros negotiating the baseball playoffs without losing a single game or the San Antonio Spurs winning every game of every round en route to an NBA championship. It's the motorsports equivalent of the 1972 Miami Dolphins' perfect season.

Nevertheless, in becoming just the 21st Top Fuel driver in modern history to hoist the championship trophy and one of only a handful to win as many as 11 races in a single season, Torrence played down his own contributions as owner and driver, deferring instead to God, family and a crew of self-proclaimed "outlaws and misfits" led by crew chief Richard Hogan and veteran Bobby Lagana Jr.

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“I’ve got a really good group of guys that have stuck with me through thick and thin and who work their tails off day-in and day-out,” Torrence said. “It’s just humbling to be a part of a team that has accomplished what we have.”

Now that team is focused on eclipsing Tony Schumacher’s record for most Top Fuel victories in a three-season span. Schumacher won 26 races over the course of the 2007, 2008 and 2009 seasons. Torrence has won 19 the last two years and entered the 2019 campaign having won 12 straight final round matches.

Ironically, it probably was Schumacher’s dad, Hall of Famer Don Schumacher, who put Torrence on the path to the championship.

When he was organizing Torrence Racing in 2011, the talented Texan approached the elder Schumacher for advice and was told, basically, that there was no way he could compete for the Mello Yello Championship with a single car team.

“I took it a little differently than it was intended,” Torrence recalled. “I have since gotten to know Don a lot better and I know he didn’t mean it in a malicious way, he was just trying to tell me that it’s very difficult to compete against multi-car teams like his.

“But at the time, it put a burr under my saddle and it’s probably one of the reasons I raced with a chip on my shoulder,” he said. “In the end, I think we proved that we can go out there and run with them no matter how many cars they have.”

Torrence’s championship was improbable for yet another reason. Unlike most of those against whom he regularly competes, the graduate of Kilgore College actually has a day job that consumes as much time as racing.

Five days a week, the outspoken Texan works at Capco Contractors, the family business, where he bids pipeline construction jobs and entertains active and potential clients. During racing season, he usually flies out of Kilgore on Friday and returns Sunday night, reporting for work Monday morning.

His is the quintessential small town success story. Although his race team leases shop space in Brownsburg, Ind., just a couple miles from Lucas Oil Raceway at Indianapolis, the home of the world’s biggest drag race, Torrence still lives in the town in which he grew up, one that once boasted the greatest concentration of producing oil wells in the world (1,100).

The only child of Capco founder, CEO and occasional Top Fuel driver Billy Torrence and his wife Kay, he doesn’t just project a cowboy lifestyle for television and social media. He actually lives it, dividing time between his home in Kilgore and a modest south Texas ranch on which he runs cattle and entertains business clients and friends like Antron Brown, the three-time Top Fuel champion with whom he drove last year in the Mint 400 off road race.

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QUICK FACTS

Steve Torrence

OWNER/DRIVER: Torrence Racing Top Fuel Dragster
NHRA MELLO YELLO DRAG RACING SERIES

Hometown: Kilgore, Texas

Born: 4/17/1983

Marital Status: Single

Height: 5-foot-7 inches

Weight: 150 pounds

Education: Kilgore College, 2003

Racecar:

Sponsor(s):

Crew Chief(s):

First Pro Start:

First Pro Win:

Career TF wins:

Career-best time: 3.655 seconds

Career-best mph: 334.24 mph

2018 Morgan Lucas Racing chassis/DSR engine and components

Capco Contractors, specialists in oil and gas pipeline construction and maintenance

Richard Hogan, Bobby Lagana Jr.

2006 (Richmond, Va.)

2012 (Atlanta, Ga.)

27

2018

Phoenix, Ariz.

2018

Topeka, Kan.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- 2018: In a record-shattering season, won 11 races including all six events in the Countdown to the Championship on the way to hoisting the Mello Yello trophy and becoming the first driver in history to win NHRA championships in both the Fuel and Alcohol categories.
- 2017: Won eight Mello Yello tour events including the Labor Day U.S. Nationals at Indianapolis, Ind., the sport's biggest event, ultimately finishing second in points after a crash at Dallas destroyed his primary race car and forced him into a backup for the final two events. Also won the Traxxas Nitro Shootout bonus race.
- 2016: Won three times in eight trips to the final round and finished third in driver points.
- 2015: Won the Mile-High Nationals at Denver and was runner-up in two other events on the way to fourth straight Top 10 finish.
- 2014: Runner-up at the U.S. Nationals at Indianapolis, Ind., for the second straight year.
- 2013: Won at Bristol, Tenn., and was the No. 1 qualifier at Denver.
- 2012: In his first season as an owner/driver, raced to three victories in five final rounds, beating eight-time champion Tony Schumacher in the Atlanta final for his first pro win.
- 2010: Finished eighth in Top Fuel in first full season as an NHRA touring pro.
- 2006: Made his Top Fuel debut driving for car owner Dexter Tuttle.
- 2005: Won the U.S. Nationals on the way to winning the NHRA Top Alcohol Dragster world championship

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Specifications

Top Fuel Dragster

Chassis

Chassis / body:	2018 Morgan Lucas Racing chassis
Weight:	2330 lbs. with driver
Wheelbase:	300 inches
Fuel Capacity:	15 gallons

Engine

Displacement:	500 cubic inches
Horsepower:	10,000 horsepower (estimated)
Torque:	4,500 to 6,500 (estimated)
Fuel Pump Flow:	105 gallons per minute
Oil:	Red Line
Fuel:	Nitromethane

Drive Train

Gear Ratio:	3.20
Clutch:	pneumatically controlled, multi-disc centrifugal
Wheels:	Sanders Racing Wheels

Safety Equipment

Firesuit / Parachutes / Belts:	Stand 21 / Simpson / Simpson
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Support Equipment

Tools	MAC Tools
Preferred Equipment Supplier	Lincoln Electric
Crew Gear:	Outer Circle Uniforms

Performance

Speed at Half Track:	290+ mph
Zero to 60 mph:	0.5 seconds
Zero to 100 mph:	0.8 seconds
Zero to 200 mph:	2.5 seconds
Gallons of Fuel Burned Per Run:	13
Maximum G-Force:	5.5 to 6 g's (equal to a space shuttle launch)
Cost of Race Ready Vehicle:	\$350,000
Cost Per Run:	\$18,500

2019 NHRA Mello Yello Series Schedule

59 th annual Lucas Oil NHRA Winternationals	Feb. 8-10	Pomona
35 th annual Magic Dry Absorbent NHRA Arizona Nationals	Feb. 22-24	Phoenix
50 th annual Amalie Oil NHRA Gatornationals	March 15-17	Gainesville
20 th annual Denso Spark Plugs NHRA Four-Wide Nationals	April 5-7	Las Vegas
32 nd annual Dodge Express Lane NHRA Spring Nationals	April 12-14	Houston
10 th annual NGK Spark Plugs NHRA 4Wide Nationals	April 26-28	Charlotte
39 th annual Arby's NHRA Southern Nationals	May 3-5	Atlanta
12 th annual NHRA Virginia Nationals	May 17-19	Richmond
22 nd annual NHRA Route 66 Nationals	May 31-June 2	Chicago
31 st annual Menard's NHRA Heartland Nationals	June 5-7	Topeka
19 th annual NHRA Thunder Valley Nationals	June 14-16	Bristol
13 th annual Summit Racing Equipment NHRA Nationals	June 21-23	Norwalk
7 th annual NHRA New England Nationals	June 2-4	Epping
40 th annual Dodge NHRA Mile-High Nationals	July 19-21	Denver
32 nd annual NHRA Sonoma Nationals	July 26-28	Sonoma
32 nd annual Cat Spot NHRA Northwest Nationals	Aug. 2-4	Seattle
38 th annual Lucas Oil NHRA Nationals	Aug. 16-18	Brainerd
65 th annual Chevrolet Performance NHRA U.S. Nationals	Aug. 29-Sept. 2	Indianapolis
<i>NHRA Mello Yello Countdown to the Championship</i>		
35 th annual Dodge NHRA Nationals	Sept. 13-15	Reading
23 rd annual AAA Insurance NHRA Midwest Nationals	Sept. 27-29	St. Louis
12 th annual NHRA Carolina Nationals	Oct. 11-13	Charlotte
34 th annual AAA Texas NHRA Fall Nationals	Oct. 18-20	Dallas
19 th annual NHRA Nevada Nationals	Nov. 1-3	Las Vegas
55 th annual Automobile Club NHRA Finals	Nov. 15-17	Pomona

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BIOGRAPHY

Richard Hogan

CREW CHIEF: Torrence Racing Top Fuel Dragster

NHRA MELLO YELLO DRAG RACING SERIES

Richard Hogan's fingerprints are all over the drag racing landscape.

Even before he directed Texan Steve Torrence to the 2018 Mello Yello Top Fuel Championship, the 59-year-old Florida native had worked for some of the biggest names in NHRA drag racing including "Big Daddy" Don Garlits, Don "the Snake" Prudhomme, Connie Kalitta, Kenny Bernstein and John Force.

He was Alan Johnson's right-hand man when Gary Scelzi won the 1997 and 1998 Winston Championships, was the crew chief of record when Melanie Troxel went to the finals in six of the first seven Top Fuel races in 2006 and led the points at mid-season and he made the tuning decisions on the Toyota Funny Car driven to a pair of NHRA tour victories by the late Bruce Sarver.

He was crew chief to "Hot Rod" Fuller, Brittany Force, Pat Austin, Doug Kalitta and Morgan Lucas and has worked with some of the most accomplished tuners in the sport including Jim Brissette, Bob Noice, Larry Frazier, Terry Major, Wes Cerny and Dale Armstrong.

While he acknowledges that he learned a little bit from every one of those with whom he has worked in his 40-year career, the resident of Ennis, Mont., picked up his biggest tip from Garlits, the man who was named the No. 1 racer in the NHRA's first 50 seasons.

"I've known him since I was a kid," Hogan said of the legend, "and I ended up going to work for him as a crew member in the 1980s. He impressed on me that there was always going to be a shortage of (good) crew chiefs. So, I just went down that path and never thought about driving."

Hogan's father, the late Charlie "the King" Hogan, was the driver in the family. In fact, he was an early nemesis of Garlits at the wheel of a lightweight V12-powered Ford roadster that dominated the western Florida racing scene in the early 1950s.

Because they share a love of the outdoors, Hogan and Torrence struck up a hunting-and-fishing friendship that in 2011 blossomed into a racing relationship.

When Torrence decided to form his own Top Fuel team, he hired Hogan to supervise the build-up. That included ordering all the nuts and bolts, all the tires and tools and hiring all the personnel. It was an alliance that paid almost immediate dividends. In 2012, his first full year as a team owner, Torrence won three races and finished ninth in the driver standings.

Except for a brief hiatus in 2013, Hogan and Torrence have been winning ever since although never like they did a year ago when they claimed 11 tour victories and swept the six races comprising the Countdown to the Championship.

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Hogan

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“We don’t know when somebody will have the chance to accomplish that (again),” Hogan said. “To go on that streak, you have to be flawless. We just kept rolling. The year was outstanding, from start to finish. Those last six though, that’s record book stuff.

“We had the budget, excellent personnel and a driver who didn’t make any mistakes. In the big picture, as many times as I’ve been to the winners’ circle with different teams, it’s hard to explain how big this was (but) I can look back 10 years from now and say, ‘wow, that was pretty special.’”

The team’s success was all the more impressive because Hogan was battling health issues for most of the campaign. In fact, an irregular heartbeat confined him to a hotel room when the team was in Denver. It didn’t keep him from participating, though. He simply studied data on a computer in his room and then got together with Bobby Lagana Jr., his at-the-track liaison, to make the necessary tuning decisions.

Finally, close friend Jim Head, with whom he has both raced and recreated, was able to get him into the Cleveland Clinic where doctors were able to shock his heart back into a normal rhythm just in time for the Countdown. The timing was perfect and Hogan and his teammates delivered a performance for the ages, one they now will try to find a way to eclipse.

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BIOGRAPHY

Bobby Lagana Jr.

**CREW CHIEF: Torrence Racing Top Fuel Dragster
NHRA MELLO YELLO DRAG RACING SERIES**

Bobby Lagana Jr. believes in God, family and the New York Yankees. And while he isn't usually fond of titles, he's okay with the one bestowed this season upon him, his brother Dom and their Capco Contractors teammates: Mello Yello Champions.

In collaboration with crew chief Richard Hogan, Lagana made the decisions that last year delivered not only a Top Fuel championship but also victories in 12 of the 24 races comprising the NHRA's Mello Yello tour.

"We're a team," Lagana says of the unit that supports the efforts of driver Steve Torrence and, occasionally, his dad, Billy. "Richard Hogan is our leader. He's the tuner of the car and makes the final calls, but we're all on the same level. Every job is so important and we're just fortunate to have a good group of guys."

Lagana took a job with Torrence Racing seven years ago in the belief that it would be for just six races.

"Our dad (Bobby Sr.) had passed away, and we signed up to come out for the last six races of 2013 to clear our minds and just help Billy run his car," Lagana said. "I never would have thought it would turn into this, but the Torrences are so family-oriented and we had such an instant connection. It was hard not to want to keep racing with them (and) this has probably been the best five or six years of racing of our lives."

As kids, the Lagana brothers traveled from track to track in a 1969 Ford ramp truck that transported their dad's "Twilight Zone" dragsters and Funny Cars.

"We were so fortunate to have grown up the way we did," Lagana said. "We had really good parents. We didn't have the perfect lifestyle, but they were really out for our best interests. They taught us to respect and to be good to people and that's how the Torrences live, both at the racetrack and in regular life."

"I picture my mom and dad every run we make," Lagana says. "Anytime something good happens, I always remember my dad. He got excited no matter what happened. We went five years and never qualified with our car (but) we still went to the race with the same enthusiasm. We were born that way, and we wear it on our sleeves."

"We love Top Fuel," he continued. "There's something about the rear wing when the car is shaking, the mechanics of it, the way it looks, the sounds, the noise – that is our life. Sure the speed is nice, but the speed is not the addiction for us, it is the car itself. Putting that car together and watching it go down the track, that is what it is all about."

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Lagana

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Nevertheless, as much as they enjoy the mechanics of racing, the Laganas both are accomplished Top Fuel drivers in their own right.

Bobby, at 41 the older of the two by eight years, won four races on the old IHRA tour, two of them at Epping, N.H., now the site of the NHRA New England Nationals. Meanwhile, Dom, who occasionally still races the “family car” in the Mello Yello Series, drove the Rapisarda Autosport International dragster to a Top Fuel victory in the 51st annual Australian National Drag Racing Association Nationals at Calder Park Raceway in Melbourne in 2016.

“There really are no words to describe how I feel for my brother,” Bobby said. “People have no idea what they are missing by not having someone in their life like Dom is in mine. I never have to question anything. I know he will always be there for me. There is no amount of money, no sponsorship, no deal that would ever separate us. We’ve been together constantly for so long and he only wants what I want – to go racing.”

Racing hasn’t always been a joy, however.

In 1998, while he was chasing IHRA points, Bobby crashed heavily off the end of the track at Rochester, N.Y., when the throttle hung open on his dragster. Although he suffered serious injuries including the loss of two fingers on his right hand, he was back racing eight 7uymonths later.

That’s just the Lagana way: family, fun and fortitude.

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BIOGRAPHY

Billy Torrence

**DRIVER: Torrence Racing Top Fuel Dragster
NHRA MELLO YELLO DRAG RACING SERIES**

Billy Torrence didn't always own his own business. He wasn't always able to do the things for his community and for his church that he does today. But for as long as he can remember, Billy Torrence has been a drag racer.

In his 20s, Torrence started welding pipeline in the oilfields of east Texas and racing whenever possible on one of the many dragstrips that dotted the regional landscape. Racing was an activity he could enjoy with his wife, Kay, and later with their only son, Steve.

After 15 years as a blue collar welder, though, he began to freelance in the oil and gas industry as a project supervisor; still racing whenever he could.

Then, in 1995, he assembled a crew of 12, secured a job site trailer, rented some heavy equipment, opened a small office and founded Capco Contractors, Inc., an oil and gas pipeline construction and maintenance business outside Henderson, Texas.

As he upgraded his business, he also upgraded his racing equipment and, in 2002, advanced for the first time to the final round of an NHRA national event (the Mid-South Nationals at Memphis, Tenn.) before losing the Super Comp title to Jeff Strickland.

Today, Capco tends to its roster of clients from a 30-acre campus that is home to more than 200 employees. Nevertheless, despite the demands of business, Torrence still is drag racing whenever he can as a teammate to his son, the reigning NHRA Mello Yello Top Fuel World Champion.

In fact, after claiming Super Comp titles at Las Vegas in 2011 and Atlanta in 2016, the 60-year-old Capco CEO last year applied an exclamation point by winning the Lucas Oil Nationals at Brainerd, Minn., NOT in the 190 mph Super Comp dragster in which he most often competes, but in the sport's ultimate vehicle, a 330 mph Top Fuel clone of the dragster his son drove to the 2018 championship.

That victory made Billy and Steve just the fourth father-and-son drivers to win titles in drag racing's ultimate category joining Connie and Scott Kalitta, Larry Dixon and Larry Dixon Sr. and Kenny and Brandon Bernstein. He followed up with a win at the 2019 Magic Dry Organic Absorbent Arizona Nationals at Phoenix that propelled him to the top of the point standings two races into the season.

While drag racing is a passion for the entire Torrence family, the race team actually is a business tool used by Capco to reward clients and employees and entertain current and future business partners.

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Billy Torrence

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“We are a full-service pipeline contractor that can handle nearly anything a customer needs,” Torrence said of Capco. “We do a lot of turnkey work that involves everything from engineering projects and right-of-way design to installing and tying-in pipe. After it’s installed, we test it. We’re also doing a lot of rehab work right now, which means excavating existing pipelines and then repairing or replacing them.

“East Texas is rich in natural gas,” he said, “so most of our projects are done for gas companies right in our own backyard although we also maintain master service agreements with many oil companies. They like that we provide a long list of services and that we perform all of them safely.”

Nevertheless, he insists that racing is an integral part of his business success. It always has provided a competitive outlet and is an activity that unites both his immediate and extended families.

“Just to come out here and race with my family, win, lose or draw, that’s just a blessing,” he said, “but to be able to come out on the professional circuit and win an event like we did last year, I felt like that was giving something back to those guys who work so hard to give me a competitive race car when I come out. There are only three guys on that team who are full-time. The rest have day jobs like me and Steve and come out whenever they can.”

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