

Racer measures time by the millisecond

By Craig Picchura
staff writer

It doesn't please Andy Mannarino that the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) ranks him ninth among all pro stock drag racers in the world.

The 28-year-old Farmington resident is obsessed with being the best.

"The guys I'm competing against are 35 or older, most of them," Mannarino says. "I want it now. Twenty-eight is not too young."

In five years of racing, Mannarino has never won a major national event. But he's come close, finishing as runner-up, being the top qualifier in preliminary events, and winning smaller regional drag races.

He stays in the expensive sport by combining business with his pleasure. Mannarino owns a body shop and engine repair outfit in Detroit known as Total Engineering and Drag Flow Products.

"Originally I was in (drag racing) be-

cause I think I'm a better driver than anybody else," Mannarino said. "That was my original intention. Now it's because we think we build better engines than anybody in the world."

Two of the city's financial backers, Hans Feustel and Leonard Glanzzi, spend countless unpaid hours tweaking and tightening the car into shape before the major runs.

THE CAR itself is a Pontiac Trans Am with a 341 cubic inch Oldsmobile engine under the hood.

To qualify as a pro stock car it must have a stock engine offered in that car. Mannarino said the Oldsmobile engine is an available option few people know about. He uses it because it's lighter and allows him to use more weight for ballast. The car can't weigh less than 2,116 pounds.

Unlike faster funny cars, pro stock race cars must resemble a family car

with two seats, doors that open and a standard wheelbase.

The outside of the car is plastered with decals from various companies that sell products like oil, wheels and car stereos. The decals are there for a reason. A driver who agrees to slap one on his car gets \$500 to \$600 to do it and more if he wins a race.

And that's the whole point of racing, says Mannarino. It's a goal that has eluded him so far.

The closest he came to winning a national event was Labor Day when Mannarino went into the Indianapolis Labor Day Classic as the top qualifier after having the fastest time in three days of qualifying heats.

He lost in the second heat when his clutch didn't grab at the start of the drag race.

"It didn't couple up correctly," explains Mannarino. "The car didn't shoot out, it rolled out."

THE LOSS was particularly frustrating, says Mannarino, because his car had the fastest speed of any other car in the pro stock category, but lost due to the slow start.

So far, he said, the best showing he's had in a major race is runner-up at a national event last year in Baton Rouge, La. There are only 12 national events in a year.

Before the drag strip, though, Mannarino made a name for himself on the city streets. He even had a four-year suspension of his driver's license to show for it.

"I got a couple big tickets in a row," he says. "It wasn't (revoked) for too many points. The judge kept telling me a driver's license is a privilege. I said 'Privilege? It's a necessity.'"

"You know how you need a car in this city. Anyway, I told them to keep the license, that I drove better without it."

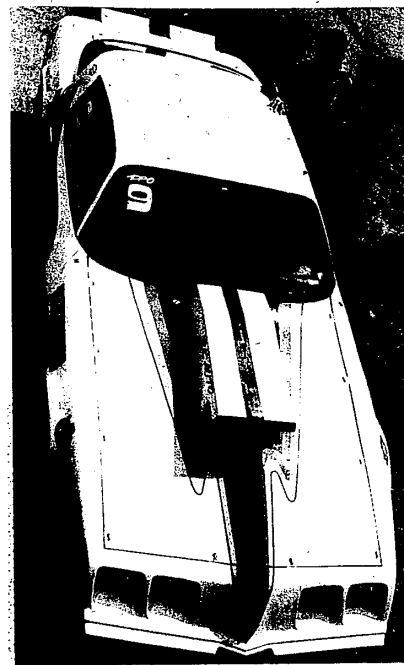
Mannarino says he'd meet challengers in a Daily's Drive-in and they'd give a third party the \$100 bet to hold. The races usually were conducted on the I-495 expressway with Mannarino driving a '67 Camaro named "Wop's Rat."

Today he's still racing for the fun of it but a lot more money is at stake. The car alone costs \$50,000 and it takes that much to tour the circuit, he says.

IN A SPORT won by one-thousandths of a second, Mannarino says he competes "for the glory — like everyone in it, not the prize money."

To show how close races are decided, Mannarino's fastest time on the quarter mile dragstrip is 8.30 seconds and the world record, set by Bob Glidden, a five-time national champion pro stock racer, is 8.23 seconds.

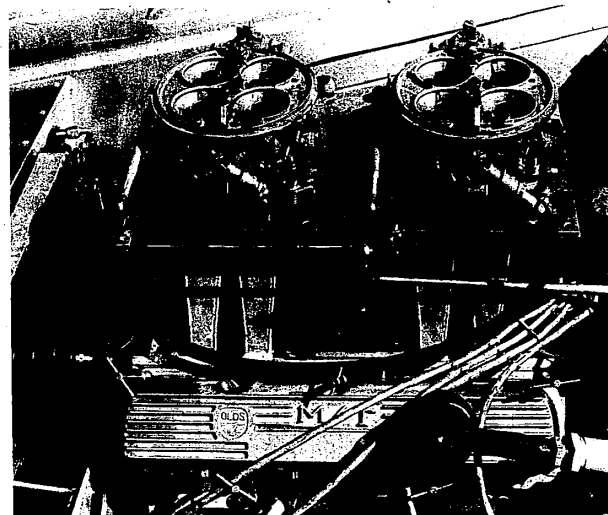
Mannarino just knows he can go faster than that.



An overhead view of Andy Mannarino's pro stock Trans Am Firebird shows that while the car might resemble a street rod there's something extra under the hood.



Andy Mannarino, driver and mechanic for the "M&M Boys" car. The name stands for Richard Maskin, a former drag racer, and Mannarino.



For those who understand engine lingo, Mannarino's car has a 341-cubic-inch Olds engine under the hood topped with two Holly 4500 carburetors which generate 745 horsepower.

Staff photos by R.S. Wilson

INSIDE ANGLES

BY MARY RODRIQUE

THE SEARCH IS ON for Farmington's finest. Nominations are being sought for the 11th annual Citizen of the Year Award, sponsored by the Farmington Chamber of Commerce.

Persons who have given outstanding service to the Farmington area above and beyond job-related duties from Sept. 1, 1980 to Sept. 1, 1981 are eligible. There are no limitations on the nominees age, sex or residency.

Previous winners include artist Marlowe Belanger, Botsford Innkeeper John Anut, Hills City Clerk Floyd Cairns and Terry Sever, a Jaycee who owns T&L Printing in Farmington.

'81 Chairman Russ Tuttle asks organizations and the general community to give serious consideration to nominating a deserving individual. Petitions are available at the Farmington Chamber office in the Masonic Temple building at Farmington Road and Grand River. Nomination forms must be returned by Oct. 10.

RIDGEWRITERS, an informal group for local writers, is seeking new members. If you'd like to exchange a few words and ideas, bring a sack lunch Friday at noon to the Farmington Community Center, 24705 Farmington Road. The group meets Fridays from noon to 2 p.m. For more information, call 477-8404.

OFFICE SPACE is needed by the American Cancer Society to better provide services to the Farmington/West Bloomfield area. If you'd like to help the Society by donating space, call Liz Bauer at 557-5353.

FORTY YOUNG ARTISTS will be honored Sunday, Sept. 20, at the Woodland Medical Center adjacent to Twelve Oaks Mall to help kick off the Children's Health & Art Coloring Book, a public-service program sponsored by Woodland Medical Center in support of Child Care Month (which is September).

The artists (12 and under) submitted health-related drawings that will be included in the soon-to-be-published coloring book, which will go on sale in the metro-Detroit area with proceeds going to benefit the Eastern Seal Society. WDW anchorwoman Jeri Moore, a member of the art-selection committee, will make a presentation to the artists, whose work will be displayed for viewing. The public is invited to the event, which will last from noon to 5 p.m. at 41935 W. 12 Mile.

HARBINGER OF THE FUTURE The

Harbinger Dance Company, which has been captivating audiences throughout Michigan and the Midwest, is coming to the Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge campus to provide concerts and lecture demonstrations and teach a number of short courses ranging from ballet and contemporary dance to jazz, tap dancing and tumbling. The dance company is a member of the National Association of Regional Ballet and was selected as Michigan's only representative on the National Endowment of the Arts dance program. For more information, call the OCC office of community services at 476-9400.

DISCUSSING GREAT BOOKS is on the agenda tonight at the Farmington Hills branch of the Farmington Community Library. Discussions are held every other Thursday starting tonight at 7:30 p.m. No previous literary studies are required.

The purpose of the group is to get members acquainted with quality literature and have a good time doing it. The participants discuss the values which can be derived from the works under discussion. The paperback books used for the series will be available for purchase from the library. This is the only charge to the group. Discussions will draw on both the Great Books and modern authors taken from the Norton Introduction to Literature anthology.

To sign up for the program, call Carole Hund, Geri Furi or Marilyn Smith at 553-0300.

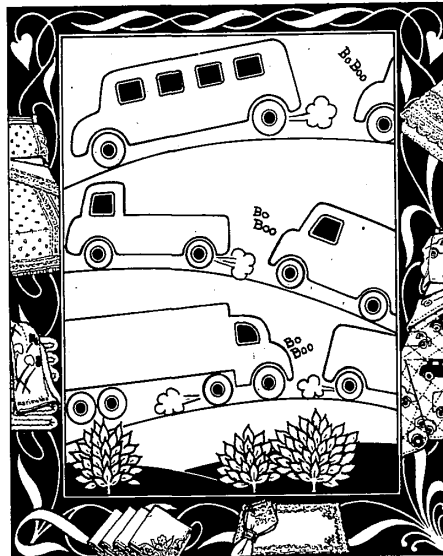
A FLEA MARKET is planned Saturday, Sept. 19, at the Finnish Cultural Center, 35200 W. Eight Mile, from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. A variety of merchandise will be for sale, and the kitchen will be open. For more information, call the Finnish Center at 478-6939.

CONFESSIONS OF A MUSIC CRITIC as confessed by Free Press music critic John Gulm, will be presented at the Farmington Hills branch library tonight from 7:30-9 p.m. The program is free.

Gulm will give an overview of the forthcoming Detroit Symphony Orchestra season and its guest conductors. The library is at 32737 W. 12 Mile, east of Farmington Road.

KUDOS TO JAN Dunbar of Farmington Hills, who was named Homemaker of the Year at the 1981 Michigan State Fair. Mrs. Dunbar impressed the judges with her kitchen creations: brownies, candy and jam.

Where do you find a Finnish truck that goes Bo Boo?



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