

Four-Wide 101: How four-wide drag racing works

History will be made April 6-8 when four-wide drag racing makes its West Coast debut with the DENSO Spark Plugs NHRA Four-Wide Nationals. For most fans, this will be their first-ever visit to a four-wide event, so here's a little sneak peek into what to expect.

Lane Designation

Lanes will be identified in numerical order from left to right facing down track. The outermost left lane will be lane No. 1, then lanes No. 2 and No. 3 will be in the middle, with the outermost right lane referred to as lane No. 4.

Track Preparation

In an attempt to maintain uniform traction quality in all four lanes, Sportsman classes, while running only two cars side-by-side, will utilize all four lanes during the entire event. Certain Sportsman classes will run only lanes No. 1 and No. 2, while other Sportsman classes will run exclusively in lanes No. 3 and No. 4. Track prep, cleanup equipment and personnel will increase accordingly.

Qualifying

For the first of four qualifying sessions, drivers with the fewest championship points will be the first to run, and the top four points leaders will be the last to run in each category. The highest in points will run in lane No. 4, second-highest in lane No. 3, third-highest in lane No. 2 and fourth-highest in lane No. 1.

Subsequent qualifying sessions will follow normal qualifying procedures, with the quickest elapsed times running last in each session.

Each team will make one qualifying run in each of the four lanes.

Scoreboards

During Four Wide, the left scoreboard will represent lanes 1 & 2. Lane 1 will be the top line, Lane 2 the bottom line. The right board will represent lanes 3 & 4. Lane 3 will be the top line, Lane 4 the bottom line. As the cars cross the finish line, the elapsed time will come up first, then after two seconds, the display will change to the MPH for all lanes, and continue this rotation.

Starting System

Since The Strip is essentially two tracks built side-by-side, with a center wall separating the two all the way to the top end, each track will have the standard NHRA Christmas tree. Atop each tree will be pre-stage and stage indicators for each lane positioned in the same order as the lanes.

The Compulink Autostart system will continue to be utilized at this event, however, unlike two-lane racing, the Autostart system will not activate until all four vehicles are pre-staged and one vehicle has staged.

Ladders for Eliminations

In structuring the ladder, the primary objective is to have the top four qualifiers meet in the final round, assuming the quickest qualifier advances in each round. The first two drivers in each pairing to cross the finish line (barring red-lighting), will advance to round two, therefore the pairings in round one will be grouped accordingly: Race A will have qualifiers 1, 8, 9, 16; Race B consists of qualifiers 3, 6, 11, 14; Race C will have qualifiers 2, 7, 10, 15; and Race D will have qualifiers 4, 5, 12, 13.

In the second round, first and second place from Race A will be in the same grouping as first and second from Race B, and first and second place from Race C and D will be in the other second-round race. Again, the first two racers across the finish line (barring red-lighting) advance to the finals.

In the four-car final round, teams will finish in the order they cross the finish line (barring red-lighting).

Lane Choice for Eliminations

First-round lane choice goes to the quickest qualifier in each group of four. Second-quickest in the group has second choice, and third-quickest has third choice.

In subsequent rounds, the first choice goes to the driver with the lower elapsed time from the previous round and so forth throughout the grouping.