# Toyota Racing’s Steve Torrence on Teamwork Making the Dream Work

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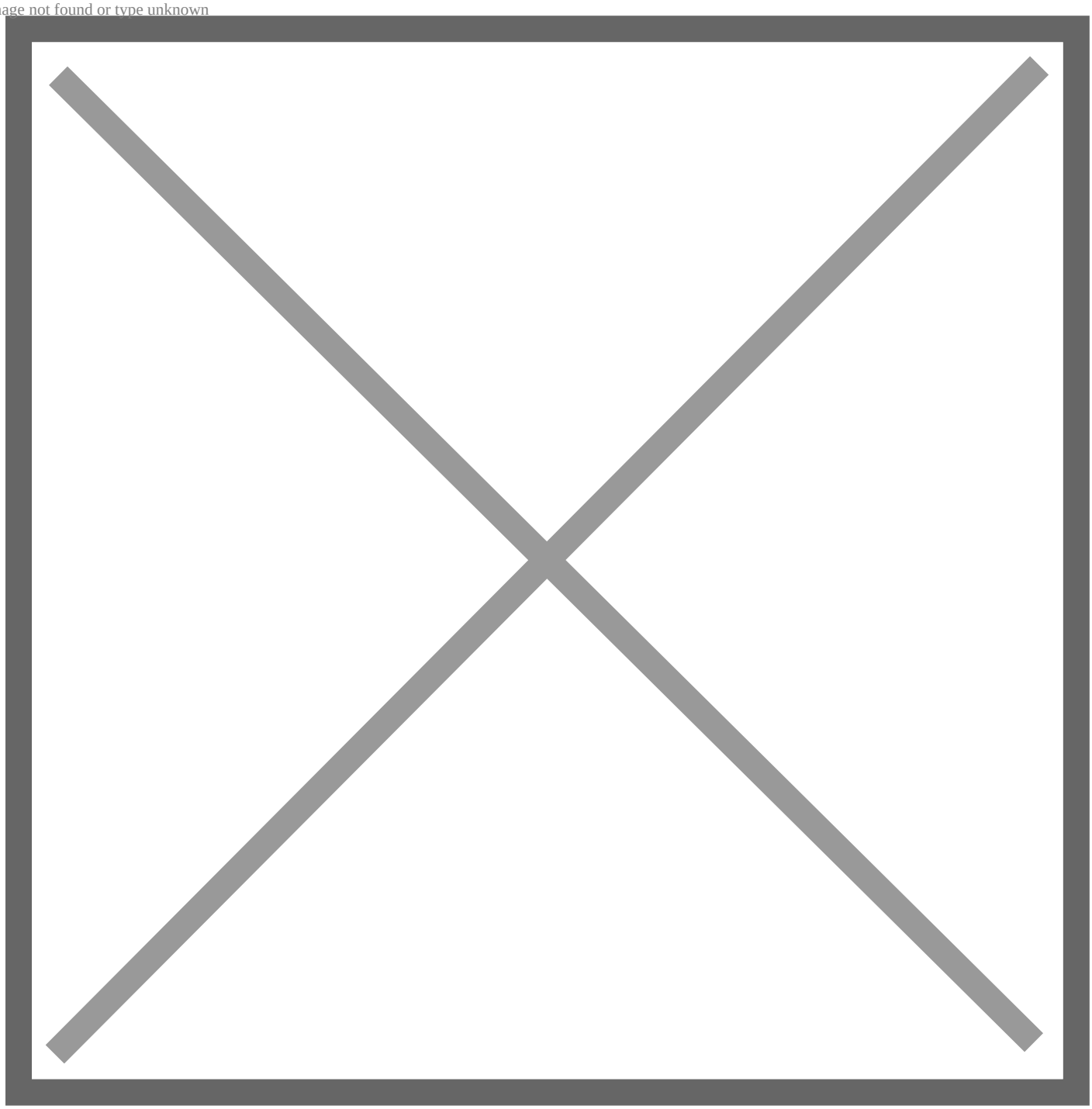


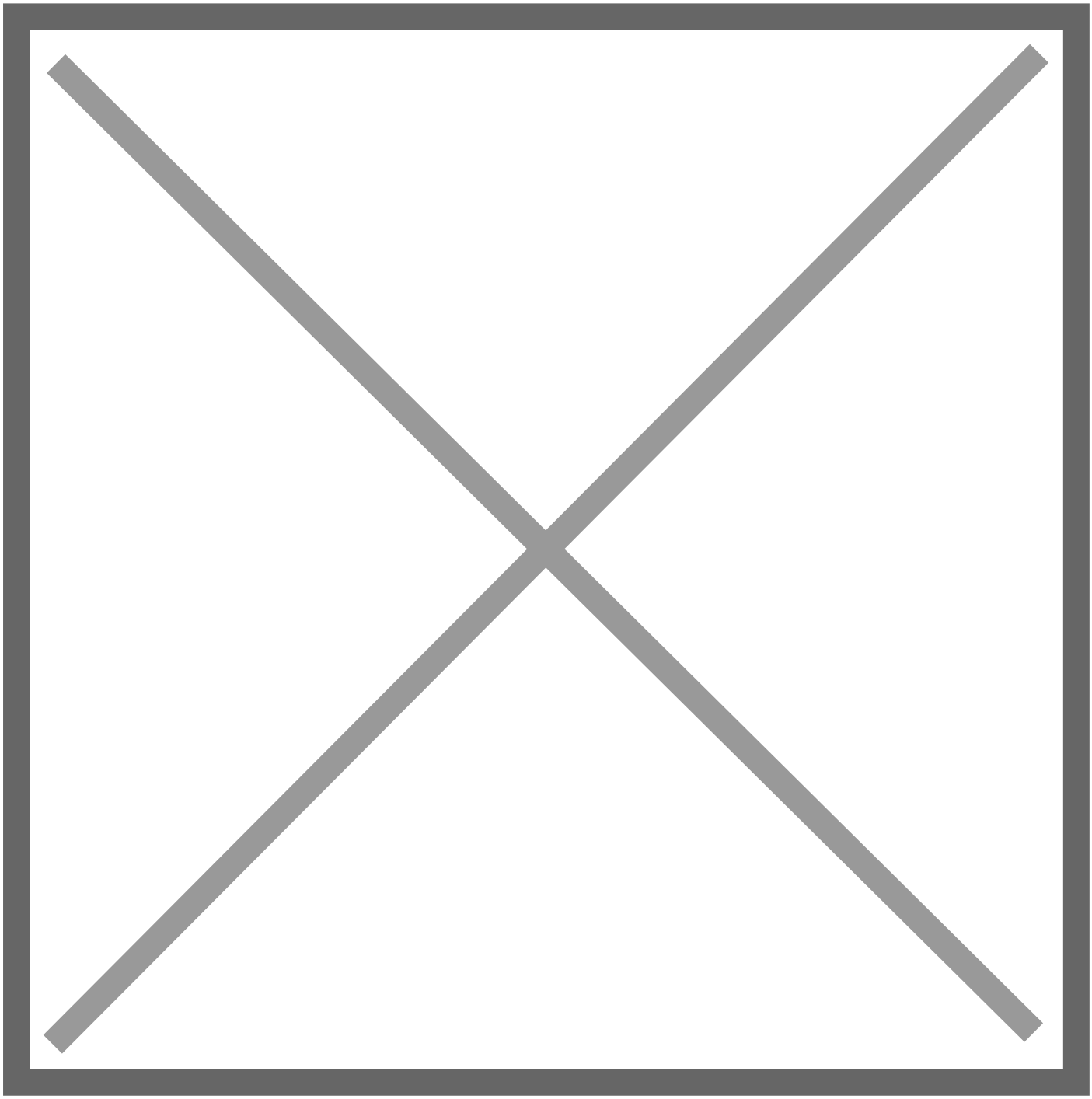
When spectators watch a professional drag race, they can sometimes only focus on the drivers on the track. But Team Toyota driver and Top Fuel champion Steve Torrence says drag racing is truly a team sport.

“When everything goes right, you just need to do your job and drive straight, leave on time and not make mistakes,” Torrence says. “But when the car doesn’t do what it’s supposed to do, that’s when the team needs to earn our keep.”

Torrence competes in the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Top Fuel, a category of drag racing that features the fastest and most powerful vehicles in the sport. The cars, which are designed for straight-line acceleration and can reach speeds of up to 330 mph, are constantly tweaked and improved by a team of mechanics. The crew also communicates with drivers like Torrence to help make real-time recommendations based on the weather and track conditions.

In a race that lasts about four seconds, every decision is make-or-break. Last August, at the 40th annual Lucas Oil NHRA Nationals at Brainerd International Speedway, Torrence and his team were forced to make a few split-second adjustments to adapt to the rising track temperatures. Torrence pulled through, clinching his first win with Team Toyota.

“My crew chiefs, we weren’t trying to smoke the tires, but that’s just the cards we were dealt,” Torrence said immediately after the race. “I did an okay job of getting it down through there — better than the opponent in the other lane — and was able to come out victorious.”



Steve Torrence

**Appreciating Life’s Every Second**

While Torrence has been a dominant force on the track for years, he’s hoping people understand he’s more than just a drag racer.

“I want people to know who I am away from the track,” he says. “Why my trials have molded me. Adversity has built me and is the reason for the intensity and drive that I have not only in racing, but in everything.”

In his first year of racing, Torrence finished seventh in regional competition, winning the 1999 South Central Division Rookie of the Year. But in 2000, the young driver had to put his racing career on hold: Torrence was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s lymphoma and spent months in the hospital undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

“It is the greatest victory I have ever won,” Torrence says. “Life is extremely short and fleeting. I hope to seize every opportunity and give back.”

The Texas native returned to racing the following year and competed in the amateur division until 2005, when he entered the semi-professional category. Torrence saw stunning success that first season, winning nine out of 13 races and his first world championship and becoming the youngest Lucas Oil Top Alcohol Dragster World Champion in class history. In 2006, Torrence turned pro and never looked back, racking up four Top Fuel championships and 52 career wins.

**Joining Team Toyota**

In 2011, Torrence debuted his family-owned Top Fuel Team, Torrence Racing, fulfilling a lifelong goal. A two-team effort, Torrence Racing comprises crew chief Richard Hogan and Steve’s father Billy, who races part-time. Torrence Racing joined Team Toyota at the beginning of the 2022 NHRA Camping World Drag Racing Series season, expanding Toyota’s team partnerships to include five Top Fuel dragsters and two Funny Cars.

“Being on the Toyota roster is truly an honor,” he says. “The team is very family oriented. It’s a large support system that truly builds each athlete in every possible way.”

Toyota supports its NHRA teams by providing tow vehicles and giving engineering, technology and track support through Toyota Racing Development (TRD). Now in his second season with Toyota, Torrence is excited to see his efforts come to life out on the track.

“I’ve been blessed to have a lot of success in my NHRA career, but I feel like this new partnership with Toyota and TRD will only improve what Torrence Racing can do,” he says. “I’ve seen firsthand that the drivers and teams associated with Toyota aren’t just part of their roster, but part of a family. They are a special manufacturer that puts people first, and that’s the type of partnership our team is excited to be a part of.”