

Speed Racer

EKU Senior Monica Mills recently competed in drag racing world championship

Some girls play with doll houses growing up. Some girls dress up and pretend to be princesses. Very few can claim to enjoy driving dragsters, but that is exactly what ECU student Monica Mills did. Mills, a 23 year old Health Services Administration senior from Barboursville, KY, is also an accomplished drag racer. In October, she competed in the International Hot Rod Association's (IHRA) drag racing world championship, the first woman ever to do so. Such an achievement certainly takes some time and hard work to earn, and Mills has definitely had plenty of preparation. "I started when I was 15. My dad is a big racer so that's how I got into it and learned everything. Now we race each other, and I've actually beat him every time but once! You can imagine how that is!" Mills laughed. For roughly 9 years she continued to race at her home track, the London Dragway in London, KY every weekend, as well as other places around the east coast such as Ohio, Tennessee, and Virginia, until recently she was able to qualify for districts. For those unaware of how it all works, drag racing involves vehicles racing to be the first to cross a set finish line. These vehicles usually begin in a stationary position, accelerating down a straight path stretching from 1/8 to 1/4 of a mile. Races generally go by extremely quickly, usually lasting under 10 seconds (or 4.94 in Mills' case) with vehicles whizzing by at hundreds of miles per hour. The IHRA operates under a point system, with racers competing to earn points to qualify for higher ranked races. Mills eventually won enough track championship points to compete in the division championship in Montgomery, Alabama, and then the Summit SuperSeries of the world championship in Richmond, Virginia soon after. When the day finally came to race, Mills was naturally a little anxious. "I was very nervous, definitely! But it was still great, I've never seen anything like that before, you know? It was so much fun!" The weight of her accomplishment as a female in the sport was not lost on her either. "I had never been around anything like that with all the publicity, but people would just come up while I was sitting in my car wanting to do interviews and taking pictures and videoing me. It was just wild! But I definitely felt like I had to try harder with all the extra attention that was being put on me." Luckily for her, she had plenty of support. "My whole family went, my mom, my sister, my dad, even a couple of guys we race with back home! Everybody was just so excited, even the IHRA officials kept saying they wanted me to win, just because they had never had a girl race there before." The event was broadcast on television, and though she ultimately didn't win, her presence in the world championship still remains a huge milestone for the IHRA. Mills just finished her last race of the season, which normally lasts from late March to around Thanksgiving, and is looking forward to next season and the future. Even her 16 month old daughter, Harley, may be joining her someday. "Her papaw, my dad, has big plans for her for sure! They actually have junior dragsters for 7 year olds and up, so he definitely wants her to race too!"