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Capps Snaps up Win in All-Mopar Dodge Funny Car Final at NHRA Gatornationals Helms Drives Drag Pak to Stock Eliminator Victory

- Ron Capps defeats John Hale in Mopar vs. Mopar Funny Car final at 46th Annual NHRA Gatornationals
- New 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car body is three-for-three this season
- Victory is the third Gatornationals crown for Capps and 43rd of his career, tying him for second all-time in Funny Car
- Defending NHRA Funny Car world champ and Mopar Express Lane driver Matt Hagan's 2015 undefeated streak comes to an end at Gainesville Raceway
- Helms captures overall Stock Eliminator class win in his 426 Race HEMI Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak
- "Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar" racer Allen Johnson's pursuit of a Pro Stock three-peat ends in the first-round

March 15, 2015, Gainesville, Florida - Ron Capps proved it again: the 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T NHRA Funny Car is a winning machine. Capps raced the new body to its third consecutive victory during eliminations on Sunday at the 46th Annual NHRA Gatornationals, marking the Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) driver's third career win at Gainesville Raceway. Mopar also scored in the Sportsman ranks, with Kevin Helms seizing the overall Stock Eliminator Wally in his 426 Race HEMI Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak.

Including Matt Hagan's victories at the NHRA Pomona and Phoenix events, the new 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T is three-for-three in competition this season. Counting Hagan's 2014 NHRA Finals win, Mopar-powered Dodge Funny Car drivers have also won the last four events, and the final marks the second all-Mopar Dodge money round matchup this season (Hagan defeated Capps at Pomona). Five Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Funny Cars advanced to the quarterfinals at Gainesville Raceway, with a trio earning three of four spots in the semifinals.

"All of us at Mopar are very proud to see the new 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car in the winner's circle for a third consecutive event with this big win by Ron Capps at the Gatornationals," said Pietro Gorlier, President and CEO – Mopar Brand Service, Parts and Customer Care. "The new Mopar-powered Funny Car package looks strong this year, and we look forward to seeing the Don Schumacher Racing drivers contend for more wins and another championship this season."

Capps' road to the final was anything but easy. Lined up against No. 8 qualifier Courtney Force to start his day, the No. 9 starter was quicker on the trigger at the starting line, clocking a .072 reaction time paired with a 4.112/312.42 to Force's .091 and 4.105/315.86 numbers, scoring the holeshot win. Next up, against No. 1 qualifier Cruz Pedregon, Capps cruised to victory with a 4.130/310.55 to Pedregon's 4.728/190.43.

In the semis Capps emerged victorious in the ultimate nail biter, edging out No. 4 qualifier Tim Wilkerson on a holeshot by just one thousandth of a second. With a 4.120/308.71 to Wilkerson's quicker and faster 4.112/308.85, once again the Mopar-powered Dodge driver's reflexes off the start proved the difference, his .066 reaction time to his opponent's .074 providing the margin of victory. In his 86th career Funny Car final round appearance, Capps' 4.115/311.05 beat Hale's 4.208/289.32 to the stripe earning him a 43rd Funny Car victory to tie him for second on the all-time list with Tony Pedregon.

"The Dodge people worked real hard on this new car and while I was happy for my teammate Matt (Hagan) when he won at Pomona and Phoenix, I had wanted to get them the first win with the new body," Capps said. "They really did

their homework. Don (Schumacher) and Dodge really worked hard together as a team to get back to the top. We won a lot of races with the old Charger but this new one is like night and day. When I came to work for Don in 2005 we had the Dodge Stratus and then the Charger and it was so hard to see out of these bodies but you never wanted to complain because it's a Funny Car and they are supposed to be the hardest things in the world to drive."

Capps jokingly added that the only negative thing he could say about the improved visibility on his new Mopar was that for the first time he could look out the side window and see how exactly how tight a race it was while running 320 mph: "Against Wilkerson I looked over and I actually got to see how very close it really was. It's really helped with everything including reaction time."

Hale pulled off one of the biggest upsets of the young season, coming out of the No. 14 spot to put 16-time champ John Force on the trailer home with a 4.541/203.16 to Force's 5.899/122.27. Hale continued his unexpected charge to the money round, recording a 4.196/277.37 in his Jim Dunn Racing Dodge Charger to best the higher-seeded Alexis DeJoria.

Hale squared off in an all-Mopar semifinal against another Dodge underdog, No. 15 Blake Alexander, who drove his Charger past No. 2 qualifier Del Worsham in round one and Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T DSR pilot Tommy Johnson Jr. in the quarterfinals. In the battle of No. 14 vs. No. 15, No. 14 triumphed, with Hale reaching the finish line first thanks to a 4.203/301.20, while Alexander slowed to a 7.443/93.94 after smoking the tires.

No. 6 qualifier and defending NHRA Funny Car champ Matt Hagan was perfect in 2015, up until the first round at Gainesville. A tick quicker off the starting line with a .063 reaction time to DeJoria's .070, the Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T DSR driver smoked the tires not long after launch, slowing to a 5.312/241.54 as DeJoria motored for the win.

"It's just one of those deals," said Hagan, winner at the first two events. "We just kind of missed it out there and maybe were trying a little too hard, but when you're racing someone like Alexis DeJoria you know they're going to go up there and give it all they've got. We'll rebound and show up at Charlotte and be ready."

Although he bowed out in the quarterfinals, Jack Beckman will leave the Gatornationals on a more upbeat note than he did the first two 2015 events. Beckman used a 4.114/310.55 to defeat Chad Head (4.126/300.46), earning his first round win since October 2014. The DSR Infinite Hero Dodge Charger R/T driver's weekend ended in round two against Wilkerson, his solid 4.096/308.50 falling short .

"Wow, it's been a long time coming," said Beckman, the 2012 Funny Car champ. "The bitter irony is our second round match-up, what our car ran would've easily won every other match-up that round; we just ran into a guy called Tim Wilkerson who's got the track figured out here. We are making progress."

The same bug that bit No. 6 starter Allen Johnson in his final qualifying run on Saturday occurred again in eliminations, resulting in a premature to end to the "Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart Pro Stock driver's day. A bit slower off the starting line than first-round opponent Drew Skillman, Johnson was making up ground quickly with a .989 60-ft mark, his fastest 60-ft time of the weekend. Unfortunately, fuel problems again led to a misfire, causing Johnson to push in the clutch early, snuffing out the 2013 and 2014 Gatornationals champ's hopes of a third consecutive event victory.

"We were on our best run of the weekend but our fuel issues bit us again just like it did on our final qualifying run, only this time we dropped a valve and tore the motor up," said Johnson, who announced this weekend that Richie Stevens Jr. will join his J&J Racing team for at least 10 events this season. "The fuel is significantly different this year and everyone has been fighting it and trying to find a solution. We thought we had it licked but the hot and humid air made it rear its ugly head again. Dry air in Pomona and Phoenix made it less of an issue at those tracks. We're going testing in Charlotte this week to try to work it out."

Dodge Dart pilot V. Gaines and Alan Prusiensky, behind the wheel of a Dodge Avenger, laid down their best runs of the weekend on race day, but it wasn't good enough to get out of the opening round. Fighting from the 13th position, Gaines was first out of the gate with a .056 reaction time to No. 4 qualifier Shane Gray's .069. The lead wasn't

enough, as Gaines' 6.588/211.86 couldn't beat Gray's 6.532/212.79 to the stripe. Prusiensky (6.644/208.97) fell to Jason Line (6.515/213.00). Greg Anderson was the Pro Stock title winner.

In the Sportsman ranks, Schriever, Louisiana, native Kevin Helms clinched the overall Stock Eliminator victory in his 426 Race HEMI Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak. Helms qualified 12th with a 9.027 ET at 1.123 under index and defeated the '14 Camaro of Paul Mercure, the '15 Camaro of Daren Poole-Adam, Tommy Turner, Jimmy Hidalgo Jr. and Jimmy Hidalgo to set up a final round match against Jeff Adkinson. Helms took out the '69 Camaro with a 8.923/149.50 to Adkinson's 10.427/126.32.

"This was a really good win," Helms said. "It's been four years since my last one and my 22nd career win, and I don't need any more droughts like that. The Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak was awesome and really easy to drive. We even did a wheelie for fans and ran the number dead on in the final, and that's all I can ask for. It was an emotional win as my brother won the Gatornationals in 2009 and we lost him a year and a half ago, so this was a big deal for all of us."

Mopar-powered NHRA Pro and Sportsman racers will see action next at the NHRA Four-Wide Nationals, scheduled for March 27–29 at zMAX Dragway in Concord, North Carolina, near Charlotte.

2015 NHRA Championship Points Standings (following the NHRA Gatornationals at Gainesville):

PRO STOCK (season wins in parentheses)

1. Rodger Brogdon – 284 (1)
2. Jason Line – 277 (1)
3. Drew Skillman – 229
4. Chris McGaha – 220
5. Erica Enders Stevens – 217
6. Greg Anderson – 203 (1)
7. Shane Gray – 166
8. **Allen Johnson (Dodge Dart) – 142**
9. Larry Morgan – 121
10. Vincent Nobile – 119
13. **V Gaines (Dodge Dart) – 94**

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. **Matt Hagan (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 267 (2)**
2. **Ron Capps (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 161 (1)**
3. Del Worsham – 213
4. Robert Hight – 177
5. **John Hale (2014 Dodge Charger R/T) – 173**
6. **Tommy Johnson Jr. (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 172**
7. Alexis DeJoria – 142
- 8t. Courtney Force – 157
- 8t. Cruz Pedregon – 147
10. Tim Wilkerson – 145
14. **Jack Beckman (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 92**

About Mopar Brand

Mopar (a simple contraction of the words Motor and PARTs) was trademarked in 1937 with the launch of an antifreeze product, but it truly made its mark in the 1960s during the muscle-car era. From Mopar Performance Parts to enhance speed and handling for both road and racing use, the brand soon expanded to include technical service and customer support.

Today, Mopar is FCA's service, parts and customer-care brand and distributes more than 500,000 parts and accessories in over 150 markets around the world. With more than 50 parts distribution centers and 27 customer contact hubs globally, Mopar integrates service, parts and customer-care operations in order to enhance dealer and

customer support worldwide. Mopar is the source for genuine parts and accessories for FCA brands.

Mopar parts are engineered together with the same teams that create factory-authorized specifications for FCA vehicles. This offers a direct connection that no other aftermarket parts company can provide. A complete list of Mopar accessories and performance parts is available at: www.mopar.com.

Mopar-first Features

Mopar has introduced numerous industry-first features including:

- Vehicle-information apps: first to introduce smartphone vehicle-information applications, a new channel of communication with customers
- Electronic owner manuals: first to introduce traditional owner manuals in a DVD and brief user-guide format. First to offer complete vehicle-information kits in Spanish
- Wi-Fi: first to offer customers the ability to make their vehicle a wireless hot spot
- Wireless charging: first to introduce in-vehicle wireless charging for portable devices
- Electronic Vehicle Tracking System (EVTS): first to market with interactive vehicle tracking device that sends owner a text when vehicle is driven too fast or too far based on pre-set parameters
- wiADVISOR: first to provide factory-connected tablet technology in the service lane for instant vehicle diagnosis
- wiTECH: first to support vehicle diagnosis and software updates leveraging off-the-shelf personal computers and a dedicated wireless tool network
- 2011 Mopar Challenger Drag Pak: first to introduce a 500-plus cubic-inch V-10 drag-race package car

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