

Pair of Local Mopar Favorites Qualify in Top-Five at NHRA Thunder Valley Nationals; Hagan Seeded Second in Funny Car, Johnson Fifth in Pro Stock

- Two local Mopar drivers qualify in top-five and are looking for their first title wins at home for the 15th annual NHRA Thunder Valley Nationals
- Matt Hagan takes 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T for a 3-second run to take No. 2 spot in Funny Car qualifying at Bristol Dragway
- Allen Johnson and "Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart seeded fifth for Pro Stock eliminations at home track
- Jack Beckman qualifies his DSR Mopar in the third spot on the Funny Car eliminations ladder

June 20, 2015, Bristol, Tennessee - Mother Nature intermittently interrupted Saturday qualifying with rain at the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Thunder Valley Nationals, pushing sessions into the cooler evening hours under the lights at Bristol Dragway and providing the opportunity for lower elapsed time runs and a reshuffling of the positions for the elimination ladders. That changed things up a bit for a pair of Mopar drivers who are both starting in the top-five in front of their hometown fans and both looking to earn their first title wins on their home turf on Father's Day.

Don Schumacher Racing driver Matt Hagan, who lives less than two hours down the road in Virginia, moved up his Rocky Boots/ Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car from the provisional third place position on Friday to the No.2 spot on the eliminations ladder on the strength of a 3.996 second elapsed time pass at 322.04 mile per hour (mph) in the final session.

Meanwhile, local favorite Pro Stock driver Allen Johnson, who hails from nearby Greeneville, Tennessee, consistently posted the fourth quickest pass in each session aboard his "Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart, but ended up fifth overall after the final qualifying run on his home track with his best effort of 6.652 sec. at 206.80 mph.

The reigning Funny Car world champ and current points leader, Hagan, was pleased with his Mopar team's qualifying effort and would love nothing more than to find his way to back to the winner's circle for a fourth time this season, but knows it'll be a challenge with track conditions expected to be much different.

"We made good strong laps under the lights and that got us a good place in the starting order but with Saturday's qualifying being so unique we don't really have any hot weather data from this weekend so that might make for an interesting race day," said Hagan who will see Jeff Diehl as his opening round opponent. "We've got a decent hot-weather car and I have all the confidence in the world in (Crew Chief) Dickie (Venables) and this team to be able to go out on Sunday and get the job done."

DSR teammate Jack Beckman also posted a sub four-second run, his eighth of the season with his Infinite Hero Dodge Charger R/T and the 12th of his career. Beckman's 3.996/319.60 final qualifying pass seeded him third, just behind Hagan on the elimination ladder with a slightly slower speed, and will have him lined-up next to John Hale for the first round.

Ron Capps put his 2015 Dodge Charger R/T eighth in qualifying with his best pass in the final session with 4.048/317.49 and will have Robert Hight in the next lane for his first contest of the day.

The defending event winner, Tommy Johnson Jr., qualified his DSR Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T 11th with a best run of 4.070/306.33 in the final session. Johnson's first round competitor will be Tim Wilkerson, in will be a

rematch of last year's final. The No.1 qualifier position went to John Force after posting a track-record time of 3.978 and speed at 323.43 mph.

Instead of running in the heat of the afternoon, simulating expected race day conditions, Saturday's two Pro Stock qualifying sessions were also shuffled to later in the day with a cooler track and air temperature. The "Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart driven by Allen Johnson was fourth on the qualifying sheets in Q3 with a 6.674/206.89 then improved on that time in the final session and was fourth quickest again with a 6.652 sec /206.80 mph run in some pretty nice conditions. But apart from lane choice, it did little to help the Mopar team prepare for Sunday's battle.

"We are going to have a lot different conditions for race day than from these last two days," Johnson said. "Tonight's track got really good and we were just a little bit too conservation with the Magneti Marelli Mopar Dodge Dart. We should have gone after it a bit more in hind sight but we were still in the top four or five every run this weekend and you have to take that as a positive. We probably left a couple of positions on the table but if we can run in the top four or five we can win on race day."

After advancing to two consecutive final rounds, both against Greg Anderson, at the last two events, Johnson will see another familiar face in Sunday's opening round as he faces Larry Morgan for a third time in as many weeks.

"I'm really looking forward to race day because it's going to be a hot nasty track tomorrow and will probably play more to us and know we'll have something for them (competitors)," Johnson added. "We're happy with the progress we've made this weekend from even the previous two events. We may not quite be back to where we are number one or two on every run but I think the next race or two you'll see us up there. Just to have two good days of qualifying and making good runs and being in the top-five speaks volumes of the team and the work these guys have put in."

Johnson's HEMI[®]-powered teammate Richie Stevens qualified 11th with his best run of 6.685/205.76 and will see Vincent Nobile in the first round. Fellow Dodge Dart driver V. Gaines qualified 15th with a 6.739 /205.82 run and will see points leader Greg Anderson as his opening round match-up. The No.1 qualifier position was awarded to Erica Enders-Stevens for her 6.632 /207.59 pass.

Three hours of eliminations coverage for the 15th annual National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Thunder Valley Nationals, the 11th of 24 events in the 2015 NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series season, will be broadcast live on ESPN2 this Sunday, June 21, beginning at 3 p.m. ET.

2015 NHRA Championship Points Standings (following the NHRA Thunder Valley Nationals Qualifying)

PRO STOCK (season wins in parentheses)

1. Greg Anderson – 950 (3)
2. Erica Enders-Stevens – 884 (3)
3. Jason Line – 808 (2)
4. Chris McGaha – 690
5. Allen Johnson – Dodge Dart – 588
6. Drew Skillman – 573 (1)
7. Larry Morgan – 550
8. Shane Gray – 543
9. Vincent Nobile – 541
10. Rodger Brodgon – 526 (1)
12. **V. Gaines – Dodge Dart – 428**

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. **Matt Hagan – (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 786 (3)**
2. **Ron Capps – (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 719 (2)**
3. John Force – 693 (2)

4. Del Worsham – 684
5. **Tommy Johnson Jr. – (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 643**
6. **Jack Beckman – (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 639 (2)**
7. Robert Hight – 581
8. Alexis DeJoria – 574
9. Cruz Pedregon – 572
10. Tim Wilkerson – 550 (1)

About Mopar Motorsports

Mopar's commitment to professional motorsports competition was established in the 1950s when a partnership ignited with drag racing pioneer Don Garlits, resulting in the breaking of numerous speed and performance barriers in HEMI®-powered vehicles over the next several decades. In 2015, Mopar looks to add to its streak of five NHRA World Championship titles in the Pro Stock (2012 and 2013) and Funny Car (2011, 2012, and 2014) categories in four years. While Mopar remains involved in a various professional motorsports series, it continues to honor its roots by being a proud supporter of amateur racing within the NHRA with its sponsorship of the HEMI Challenge and Mopar's Tom Hoover Sportsman Challenge.

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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