

Beckman, Hagan Take 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T for Record Runs at NHRA Sonoma Nationals to Top Funny Car Qualifying

- Jack Beckman drives Mopar to No.1 qualifier honors at 28th annual NHRA Sonoma Nationals with quickest elapsed time run in Funny Car history
- Beckman carries momentum from win at Mopar Mile-High Nationals to top Funny Car qualifying with record setting 3.921-second run at Sonoma Raceway
- Beckman backs up the run on his final qualifying lap to reset the national record and earn 20 bonus points
- Points leader Matt Hagan qualifies his Mopar Express Lane Dodge R/T No.2 with fastest pass in Funny Car history at 325.77 miles per hour and best career E.T. of 3.967
- Three DSR Dodge Charger R/T machines powered to five three-second runs in qualifying to bring total to 19 this year to date
- Pro Stock driver Allen Johnson qualifies Magneti Marelli Dodge Dart tenth for eliminations

August 1, 2015, Sonoma, California - Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) pilot Jack Beckman carried the momentum of last week's title win in Denver right into preparations for the 28th annual National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Sonoma Nationals by powering his Infinite Hero 2015 Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car to the No.1 qualifier position with a record shattering 3.921-second elapsed time run with a top speed of 323.43 mile per hour at Sonoma Raceway.

In Friday qualifying, Beckman clocked an initial 3.982 sec./320.05 mph pass to take the provisional pole position then unleashed a monumental 3.921-second run at 323.43 mph to eclipse the previous record by 0.038 of a second. Beckman not only officially secured his second No.1 qualifier position of the season with his fourth and final qualifying pass, but more impressively, backed up the run (within 1%) with a 3.958 second lap (318.84 mph) to set the national Funny Car record and earn 20 bonus points for his efforts.

"These moments are not lost on me," Beckman said. "They are incredibly special. It does matter that we qualify the best, it does matter that we set low ET of the world, all I'm telling you is in the big picture of racing it's not our main goal. It's beyond satisfying. I never thought I would be here, I really didn't. I was out here in 2004 going through chemotherapy and I won the divisional race in my super comp car and I didn't know, we took the pictures down there and I thought this might be our last winner's circle ever. Not because I was a fatalist but because you just don't know. 19 wins, a championship and all of this stuff later it is not lost on me. This is just absolutely enormous."

It was Beckman's 15th career sub four-second pass, his 11th this year alone in the new 2015 Dodge Charger R/T and also the most by any driver in a season. The new Mopar body now has 19 three-second runs to date with the addition of three from Beckman and two more from DSR teammates Matt Hagan and Ron Capps this weekend as well.

The driver of the Infinite Hero machine has also accumulated more trips to the winner's circle this season than he has in any previous year of his career with his fourth win earned at last weekend's Mopar Mile-High Nationals at Bandimere Speedway, and Beckman isn't looking to pull the parachutes on that anytime soon. In fact, he would gladly trade the No.1 qualifier position, along with the national E.T. record, for a title win on Sunday.

"I really would," said Beckman who will see Tony Pedregon as his first round opponent. "This is stuff that is phenomenal for the crew for the crew chief. That's their stats. I haven't had a lot of No.1 qualifiers. 12 total. But for me, being No.1, it doesn't even come even in the same league as holding up a trophy at the end of the day. I think I've only done that twice. That's domination. If we can do both, I'll take it. That would make it significant."

A total of seven Funny Cars drivers took their machines down the Sonoma track for three-second runs including reigning world champ Matt Hagan whose Mopar Express Lane 2015 Dodge Charger R/T was second on that list.

Not to be completely outdone by his DSR teammate, Hagan took his own record drive by posting the fastest speed recorded by a Funny Car at 325.77 mph to accompany his best career elapsed time pass of 3.967 seconds to earn the No. 2 spot on the qualifying sheets. He'll see Paul Lee as his first match-up.

"If you look at the ladder there are a lot of great cars that have laid down a lot of great numbers this weekend at Sonoma," said Hagan who leads the Funny Car points ahead of Beckman in second place and is also looking to add to his four wins earned this season so far. "It's mind blowing how these crew chiefs get these cars to go so fast and keep going even faster. I'm super proud of my guys to give me a great car last night and this weekend. We have to do it on race day though. We're going to be racing in the heat and you have to get down the track on Sunday. It's always tricky, but I trust my team and crew. I know they'll put a great car under me and I'm going to do my job. You can't take anything for granted. You have to be ready for any situation on race day."

Seeded fourth on the eliminations ladder is Ron Capps with his 3.970/ 322.19 mph hot lap on Friday night, but it came at a price as his 2015 Dodge Charger R/T crossed the finish line in flames when it backfired at the end of the run.

"This new body is great and that's a tribute to the DSR guys and Dodge and Mopar," Capps said. "Last year, it certainly would have had the body off like at Pomona last February. The fab shop guys work countless hours and everyone at Dodge made a better race car for us to drive. They did everything right. We had great speed on the lap and I was able to get off the track and drive right up to the Safety Safari. All of the stuff we and NHRA have done to make the sport safer worked. Don stresses to us all and the crew chiefs to work on safety. To have an owner that's worried about safety as well as performance makes it great to come to work."

Capps, who hails from nearby San Luis Obispo, Calif., currently sits fourth in points with two wins and has earned a Wally at his home race on four occasions with three of them coming in the past five seasons. He'll start his pursuit of another title by facing off against Jeff Diehl in the opening round.

The fourth DSR entry, Tommy Johnson Jr. put his Make-A-Wish 2015 Dodge Charger R/T tenth on Sunday's ladder with a best lap of 4.031/ 317.05, giving up lane choice to Tim Wilkerson in the first round.

Coming away from the Mopar Mile-High Nationals last weekend with a runner-up finish after a memorable Pro Stock final round showdown, Allen Johnson drove his "Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart to a best elapsed time qualifying pass of 6.535 seconds and top speed of 212.56 mph to put him tenth on the eliminations ladder. He'll be paired up with Bo Butner for the first round.

"This whole weekend has been a bit of a challenge," said Johnson whose only win at Sonoma Raceway came in 2012 on route to his world championship title. "The first run we had a slow tire on it. The second run we blew the manifold off it. The third run we put an old set of tires on and blew them off and spun. But that last run was a decent race day set up. We'll take that and work with it. I think there was at least a hundredth left in that one which gets us closer to the low car. Our goal is to try to get out of the first round with lane choice because without it we'll have to be perfect. If that's what it will take, that's what we'll have to do."

The HEMI-powered Deric Kramer qualified 11th with a 6.537/211.10 and will line up his Dodge Dart next to Jonathan Gray for his match-up. V. Gaines qualified his Dodge Dart 16th and will attempt to use his HEMI-power to upset No.1 qualifier Chris McGaha in the opening Pro Stock eliminations round.

Three hours of eliminations coverage from the 28th annual NHRA Sonoma Nationals, the 15th of 24 events in the NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series and the second stop on the three-race western swing, will air on Sunday, August 2, starting at 9 p.m. (ET).

2015 NHRA Championship Points Standings (following NHRA Sonoma Nationals Qualifying)

PRO STOCK (season wins in parentheses)

1. Greg Anderson – 1243 (4)
2. Erica Enders-Stevens – 1196 (4)
3. Jason Line – 1029 (2)
4. Chris McGaha – 973
5. **Allen Johnson – Dodge Dart – 877 (1)**
6. Larry Morgan – 874 (2)
7. Drew Skillman – 779
8. Shane Gray – 757
9. Vincent Nobile – 715
10. Johnathan Gray – 701
12. **V. Gaines – Dodge Dart – 573**

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. **Matt Hagan – (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 1122 (4)**
2. **Jack Beckman – (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 1005 (4)**
3. John Force – 927 (2)
4. **Ron Capps – (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 916 (2)**
5. Del Worsham – 902
6. **Tommy Johnson Jr. – (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 887 (1)**
7. Cruz Pedregon – 815
7. Tim Wilkerson – 815 (1)
9. Alexis DeJoria – 765
10. Robert Hight – 744

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