

## **Trio of Semifinal Appearances for Mopar at NHRA SpringNationals in Houston**

### **Sportsman Racer Kevin Helms Takes Mopar to Stock Eliminator Title Win**

- DSR Funny Car drivers Jack Beckman and Tommy Johnson Jr. advanced their Mopars to the semifinals at the 29th annual NHRA SpringNationals
- Fifth seed Allen Johnson drove his Mopar to the Pro Stock semifinal round at Royal Purple Raceway
- Sportsman Racer Kevin Helms takes 2010 Mopar Dodge Challenger to a Stock Eliminator title at the SpringNationals
- Jacob Pitt drove his 2003 Dodge Status to a runner-up finish in the Sportsman Super Stock final

May 1, 2016, Baytown, Texas -

A trio of Mopars, made up of two Funny Cars and a Pro Stock, battled their way through eliminations to semifinal appearances at the 29th annual National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) SpringNationals, while in the Sportsman ranks, a Stock Eliminator title win and runner-up finish in Super Stock were also earned at Royal Purple Raceway near Houston Texas.

Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) drivers Jack Beckman, seeded 12th and Tommy Johnson Jr., seeded seventh, made some good gains with the Dodge Charger R/T Funny cars through eliminations to make it to the semifinals.

Beckman, who despite having been No. 1 qualifier at three of the six NHRA events this season, struggled in qualifying at Houston but seemed to have made some progress on race day after posting his best lap of the weekend, a 3.958 second pass at 319.67 mph, to earn the first round win over Robert Hight.

In the second round, Beckman's quicker reaction time at the starting line allowed his slower 3.949/325.22 to post the holeshot win over Del Worsham 3.944/324.59 and advance to a semifinal match-up against Tim Wilkerson.

"It's disappointing to not win but the silver lining is that we found some things about this car that will help us down the line," Beckman said. "We came out of here with semifinals points and we're headed in a direction that makes me very excited to get to the next race in two weeks in Atlanta."

Johnson and his Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T crew were also bolstered by two round wins against John Force and Alexis DeJoria, prior to his semifinal loss to eventual title winner Courtney Force, who also took over the points lead with her first win of the season.

"We had a really good race day," Johnson said. "Coming into this race, we had struggled a bit this season so today we were really happy with how the car performed and how well our guys adjusted to the conditions because they were totally different than yesterday. The guys did a nice job making really solid, consistent runs. It seems like we've got our race car back to where we're able to tune and make changes and it responds how we want it to. That's big, that will help give us a little momentum going forward."

Maybe it was the bright yellow special paint scheme on his Pennzoil Dodge Charger R/T, but Matt Hagan had a much sunnier outlook on his Mopar team's progress after going two rounds on Sunday.

He ran a 3.982-second pass at 317.64 mph to earn the win over Chad Head, and despite lowering the mark with 3.954/324.59 on his second lap, it wasn't quite enough to defeat Wilkerson, who finished runner-up to title winner Courtney Force.

"Obviously, we wanted to go more rounds here in Houston, but we've made huge headway since the last few races," said Hagan who with the result makes his way back into the top-ten in points. "We had some chassis issues then kind of got in a rut before we went back to our old race car. We're still figuring it out a little bit because every year things are a little different.

"I really, truly in my heart believe we've turned a corner," Hagan added. "We're very positive, very optimistic for the next race at Atlanta in two weeks. We've definitely got something good to work with."

DSR teammate Ron Capps also made it to the quarterfinals with a win over Cruz Pedregon and a loss to Courtney Force, and is currently on 22 points behind her in third place in the Funny Car standings on the strength of two final round appearances and a No.1 qualifier position so far this season.

### **Pro Stock Action**

Top Mopar Pro Stock qualifier Allen Johnson drove from his fifth seeded position to his second semifinal appearance of the season at Royal Purple Raceway on Sunday.

Johnson began his day with a 0.027-second reaction time to his first round opponent Shane Gray's 0.040, then drove his Marathon Petroleum Dodge Dart to a 6.635 second / 208.46 mph pass, to advance to the quarterfinals. It also gave his Mopar lane choice over Drew Skillman for the next battle, where Johnson took another round win with a 6.655/208.42 while his opponent ran into trouble and had to push in the clutch.

That gave Johnson the opportunity to do battle against Greg Anderson in the semifinals for a second time this season after they had previously met at the Gatornationals. Despite a 0.023 second reaction time and a solid 6.644/208.23 run, Johnson fell short of beating Anderson's (0.038) 6.604/209.85. Anderson went on to win his third national title of the season by beating his teammate Jason Line in the final.

"We made great strides this weekend and we're leaving here with our heads held high," said Johnson about the progress being made with the new electronic fuel-injection system. "We know what direction to work in now and we'll be even better in Atlanta."

Seeded sixth on the Pro Stock ladder, the two-time defending title winner at Houston, Erica Enders had hoped to challenge for a third consecutive title. However, a 0.035 second reaction time and 6.659/207.18 pass aboard her Mopar Performance Dodge Dart, wasn't enough to counter Chris McGaha's 0.018 second reaction time and 6.668/206.26 lap, for the loss on a holeshot that served up some disappointment along with a side dish of motivation.

"Winning only makes you want to win more, and when you don't you're clearly disappointed," Enders said. "We've had a lot of fun here the last couple of years, but I guess it just wasn't meant to be this time around. That's OK; it only makes all of us fight that much harder to get back to the winner's circle."

You could say that Jeg Coughlin Jr. has been in a bit of a "foul" mood lately and you can hardly blame him after enduring some struggles with the program since changes were instituted to the Pro Stock category this season, but namely because of three red-light foul starts in the first six events this year so far. Even just one foul would seem gravely out of character for Coughlin, but three of them really serve to emphasize how much he is trying to make it up on the tree.

"I'm just trying to get there and drive our lights out," said Coughlin whose "Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar" Jegs.com Dodge Dart qualified 11th and was 0.002 seconds too quick for his first round start against Drew Skillman.

Seeded 13th, V. Gaines and the HEMI-powered Western Motorsports Kendall Dodge Dart saw their day shortened with a first round lost to Line.

### **Sportsman Racing**

It was a successful day for Mopar in the Sportsman racing ranks, with a national title win and a runner-up finish

earned by drivers in both Stock Eliminator and Super Stock classes at the SpringNationals.

Schriever, Louisiana native, Kevin Helms took his 2010 Mopar Dodge Challenger to a national title win in the Stock Eliminator category on Sunday by beating Jerry Emmons in the final and dedicating his trip to the winners circle to fellow Louisiana resident and long-time Sportsman "Papa Joe" Teuton, who passed away at the age of 75 on April 25.

The Wally trophy was Helms' fourth earned at the SpringNationals (two Stock and two Super Stock), his 16th in Stock Eliminator and the 24th win of his career. His last win at Houston had come in 2007.

To earn the title, Helms defeated Hagen Gary, fellow Mopar driver Austin Williams ('72 Plymouth Duster), Jimmy Hidalgo, Allen Sherman and then Mike McMahan in the semifinals to advance to the Stock final elimination against Emmons.

Helms had also made his way through Super Stock eliminations aboard his 2011 Dodge Challenger, advancing to an all-Mopar semifinal battle against the 2003 Dodge Stratus of Jacob Pitt of Mansfield, Texas.

Pitt won that match-up to advance to the Super Stock final elimination against Tommy Phillips, coming away with the runner-up finish for Mopar after a red light start by just -0.004 seconds.

Next up for Mopar teams is the Summit Racing Equipment NHRA Southern Nationals, the seventh of 24 events on the 2016 NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series season schedule, at Atlanta Dragway on May 13-15. Television coverage of the event will be available on FS1 with a one hour qualifying show on Friday, May 13 at 7:30 p.m. (ET) and a one hour final qualifying recap on May 14 at 10 p.m. (ET). A three hour eliminations broadcast is scheduled for Sunday, May 15 starting at 4:30 p.m. ET.

#### **2016 NHRA Championship Points Standings**

(Following the NHRA SpringNationals Race Final)

##### **PRO STOCK** (season wins in parentheses)

1. Jason Line – 689 (3)
2. Greg Anderson – 610 (3)
3. Bo Butner – 508
4. Drew Skillman – 399
5. Chris McGaha – 339
6. **Allen Johnson – Dodge Dart – 318**
7. Vincent Nobile – 262
8. **Erica Enders – Dodge Dart – 257**
9. **Jeg Coughlin Jr. – Dodge Dart – 255**
10. Alex Laughlin – 220
11. **V. Gaines – Dodge Dart – 186**

##### **FUNNY CAR** (season wins in parentheses)

- 1t. Courtney Force 439 (1)
- 1t. Tim Wilkerson – 439 (2)
3. **Ron Capps – (Dodge Charger R/T) – 417 (1)**
4. Robert Hight – 404 (1)
5. John Force – 384
6. **Jack Beckman – (Dodge Charger R/T) – 379**
7. Del Worsham – 376
8. Alexis DeJoria – 339 (1)
9. Chad Head – 303
10. **Matt Hagan – (Dodge Charger R/T) – 280**
11. **Tommy Johnson Jr. – (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 274**

**About Mopar Motorsports**

The Mopar brand'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 2016, Mopar will look to once again vie for a NHRA World Championship title in both Pro Stock and Funny Car categories. While Mopar remains involved in a various professional motorsports series, it continues to honor its roots by being a proud supporter of Sportsman 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](http://www.mopar.com).

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