

Hagan Dominates at Topeka, Scores Back-to-Back Wins in Mopar Express Lane Dodge

- Matt Hagan caps superb weekend at NHRA Kansas Nationals with victory over Jack Beckman in all-Mopar Dodge Funny Car final
- Hagan races Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car to second consecutive victory and 20th of his career
- Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) driver Hagan also collects No. 1 qualifier spot and sets NHRA national records for time and speed in dominant performance at Heartland Park Topeka
- Hagan's DSR teammate Beckman advances to second straight final
- Mopar-powered Marathon Dodge Dart Pro Stock driver Allen Johnson tied for fourth in points after third consecutive semifinals appearance
- Erica Enders earns round win in Mopar Performance Dodge Dart
- Jeg Coughlin Jr. exits in round one in "Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar" Jegs.com Dodge Dart

May 22, 2016, Auburn Hills, Mich. - For the second consecutive race, Matt Hagan steered his Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car to victory in an all-Mopar final round, capping off a dream weekend with a win at the 28th Annual NHRA Kansas Nationals at Heartland Park Topeka. Hagan also used Mopar HEMI® power to claim the No. 1 qualifier spot and set NHRA national records for time and speed at the event.

The victory was the second of the season for Hagan and 20th of his career, and the third win of 2016 for a Mopar-powered Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) driver. Hagan outraced DSR Mopar Dodge teammate Jack Beckman in the final for the second event in a row, and also jumped from ninth to fourth in the point standings with his first triumph at the Heartland Park Topeka venue.

"Everyone at Mopar is excited to see Matt Hagan collect his second victory of the season at Topeka," said Pietro Gorlier, Head of Parts and Service (Mopar), FCA - Global. "With back-to-back wins at the last two events, it's clear that Matt and his Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T team are rounding into championship form."

Hagan set Funny Car national records for time and speed with a pass of 3.862 seconds at 335.57 mph during Friday qualifying to claim the No. 1 spot heading into eliminations. He opened Sunday with a 3.943/325.69 run to send home Brian Stewart, then came out on top of a close drag race with Robert Hight in round two, recording a winning 3.942/323.81 to Hight's 3.963/325.37.

In the semis, Hagan won easily with a 3.951/324.05 pass after Courtney Force smoked the tires, setting up a rematch of the NHRA Atlanta event final against teammate Beckman, who took out Dale Creasy, DSR Make-A-Wish Dodge pilot Tommy Johnson Jr. and Tim Wilkerson to advance to his second straight money round of the season.

Heading into the final, Beckman was seven-for-seven in sub-four second passes at Topeka, with Hagan recording six runs below the four-second mark, but ironically the biggest battle boiled down to a pedal fest. Beckman smoked the tires virtually off the start, but Hagan also encountered trouble, flirting with the center line as his Mopar Express Lane machine lost traction and fishtailed. Hagan was able to get the car in and out of the throttle enough for a victorious 5.724/179.04 to hold off Beckman's 6.560/146.75.

"I'm just tickled about the job (crew chief) Dickie Venables and all our Mopar/Rocky guys are doing," said Hagan, who won Funny Car world championships in 2011 and 2014 with Mopar power. "When you have a fast racecar like we did it's hard to pull it back when the sun comes out. I didn't expect to have to pedal the racecar like I had to. It

caught me off guard.

"We set world records for E.T. and speed and to come out here and win goes to how hard my guys have been working."

With his second final round of the season, Infinite Hero Dodge Charger R/T driver Beckman closed to within 12 markers of current Funny Car points leader Courtney Force. "We have a car that made seven 3-second runs consecutively. Nobody has ever done that," said Beckman. "We had every reason to think going up there for the final that we'd get our eighth with a good shot to get the trophy. We really feel like we have something to prove when we get to Epping (the next event)."

Mopar-powered Pro Stock driver Allen Johnson is slowly but surely moving up in the point standings, and also methodically narrowing the performance gap between his Marathon Petroleum Dodge Dart and the teams that have dominated early in the season. Qualifying in the seventh position, Johnson motored down the track in the opening round with a 6.655/208.20 to defeat Aaron Strong, who left too early and earned a red light foul. In the second round Johnson had lane choice and left first with a .013 reaction time paired with a 6.676/207.02 to outrun Bo Butner to the stripe, advancing to his third consecutive semifinals appearance.

Lacking lane choice against semifinal opponent Greg Anderson, Johnson posted a solid .022-second reaction time but was forced to shove in the clutch at half-track after his Dodge Dart lost traction, possibly due to a massive oil down in the lane earlier in the event. Johnson slowed to a 7.317/144.18 to Anderson's winning 6.672/206.67.

Defending and two-time NHRA Pro Stock champ Erica Enders made progress in her Mopar Performance Dodge Dart, knocking out Drew Skillman in the opening round. Enders, the No. 9 qualifier, clocked a 6.706/205.79 and took the win when Skillman left .002-second too soon. Without lane choice in the second round against event winner Jason Line, Enders showcased her driving skills, leaving the starting line first with an .014 light to her foe's .041. Enders tried mightily but couldn't hold off Line at the top end, her pass of 6.725/204.98 falling short of his 6.661/207.85 mark.

"When I unclutched it, I knew I was good," said Enders. "The first three gears I didn't see him, so I thought maybe we had a chance, but I plugged it in high gear, and Jason came around me. I saw him come by me."

"We have the right attitudes," Enders said of her Elite Motorsports Mopar Dodge team. "We have the right mindset, we have tremendous work ethic. The stars aren't lining up for us at the moment, but they will, and when they do, it's game on."

Jeg Coughlin Jr. will look to rebound after an early exit in his "Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar" Jegs.com Dodge Dart. Starting No. 13, Coughlin's 6.746/205.07 pass wasn't enough to beat No. 4 qualifier Shane Gray, who made the third-quickest pass of the opening round at 6.653/207.91.

"We've got a lot of on-track testing scheduled for this coming week," said Coughlin, a five-time Pro Stock world champion. "Maybe some little morsel will rear its head, and when it does, it's going to fix four cars real quick." Dodge Dart Pro Stock drivers V. Gaines and driver Deric Kramer also were unable to advance out of the first round.

Next up for the NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series is the ninth of 24 events, the NHRA New England Nationals, scheduled to take place June 3-5 at New England Dragway in Epping, New Hampshire.

2016 NHRA Championship Points Standings (Following the NHRA Kansas Nationals Race Final)

PRO STOCK (season wins in parentheses)

1. Jason Line – 942 (5)
2. Greg Anderson – 816 (3)
3. Bo Butner – 614
- 4t. Allen Johnson – Dodge Dart – 465**
- 4t. Drew Skillman – 465
6. Chris McGaha – 427

7. Vincent Nobile – 346
8. **Erica Enders – Dodge Dart – 341**
9. **Jeg Coughlin Jr. – Dodge Dart – 339**
10. Alex Laughlin – 327
12. **V. Gaines – Dodge Dart – 248**

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. Courtney Force - 601 (1)
2. **Jack Beckman – (Dodge Charger R/T) – 589**
3. Tim Wilkerson – 554 (2)
4. **Matt Hagan – (Dodge Charger R/T) – 511 (2)**
5. Robert Hight – 510 (1)
6. **Ron Capps – (Dodge Charger R/T) – 504 (1)**
7. Del Worsham – 485
8. Alexis DeJoria – 451 (1)
9. John Force – 448
10. **Tommy Johnson Jr. – (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 404**

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.

Mopar

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