

Capps Takes Dodge Charger to Sonoma NHRA Nationals Final Round

- Ron Capps drives his Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) Dodge Charger R/T to NHRA Sonoma Nationals final round
- Sonoma final is seventh of season for Capps and 97th of career as NHRA Funny Car driver
- Capps secures berth in NHRA's Countdown to the Championship playoffs
- Mopar Funny Cars continue to shine in NHRA competition, make 10th final of first 15 Mello Yello Series events of 2016
- DSR Mopar/Pennzoil® Top Fuel driver Leah Pritchett leaves Sonoma holding down 10th place in championship standings
- Mopar Dodge Dart Pro Stock cars continue to battle for position in NHRA Countdown to the Championship

July 31, 2016, Sonoma, California - The 15th race of the 2016 season of NHRA's Mello Yello Drag Racing Series also marked the second race of three in a row for the Mopar competitors, and while last weekend they brought home a trophy, this weekend they came up just one win light short. In the final round of the 29th annual NHRA Sonoma Nationals at Sonoma Raceway, Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car driver Ron Capps narrowly missed his fifth win of the season in a very close race with John Force as the two winningest drivers in the history of the class raced for the trophy.

Capps made four very good passes during eliminations, and in the closing moments of the Sonoma Nationals, Capps and Force were side-by-side as they raced down the track. At the top end, though, it was Force with a 3.948-second pass at 324.59 mph to halt Capps' 3.960/320.13.

"I'm so proud of Rahn Tobler [crew chief] and this team for what they were able to accomplish this weekend, said Capps, who was racing in his seventh final of the season and 97th of his Funny Car career. It was also the 10th final for a Mopar Dodge Charger R/T in the first 15 races of the year. "We had to take a couple steps back and make a last-second move with our clutch system that not only paid off today but will also help us when the Countdown begins after Labor Day. The car was so consistent, and the performance will get better. We lost a close race, but we didn't give it away. Force just got us at the finish line. It was a fun race. We'll just keep chugging away."

Capps, the incoming NHRA Funny Car points leader, qualified his HEMI®-powered nitro Funny Car in the No. 5 position and began his charge towards the final with a first-round victory over Cruz Pedregon, 3.942-seconds at 319.45 mph to his challenger's troubled 4.112 at a slowing 285. In round two, Capps came head-to-head with Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger driver Matt Hagan, his DSR teammate. At just about 60 feet down the racetrack, Hagan began to haze the tires and fell into tire shake, necessitating an abrupt end to his pass and allowing Capps to surge ahead for a 3.961/322.96 triumph.

A semifinals meeting of heavy hitters saw Capps and his fearsome Dodge sparring with No. 1 qualifier Del Worsham. Capps left the starting line first and kept ahead at each increment down the drag strip, sealing the deal with a big 3.938/324.51 in his sleek Charger to his opponent's 3.977/320.97.

With his performance on Sunday in Sonoma, Capps secured his position in NHRA's 2016 Countdown to the Championship, the six-race playoffs that begin in Charlotte just after the U.S. Nationals in Indianapolis. Notably, the driver who made his nitro debut in 1995 has finished No. 2 in the points on four occasions and has yet to win the season title. The Southern California native has so far had one of his most impressive seasons to date, winning the season opener and then grabbing a firm hold of the points lead with back-to-back wins this summer in Epping and Englishtown. To date for the year, Capps has won four times in seven final rounds.

DSR Dodge Charger driver Jack Beckman, in command of the Infinite Hero Funny Car, won his first round match over teammate Tommy Johnson Jr., in the Make-A-Wish Dodge, before tire shake in the second round put an end to his own day.

Mopar in Top Fuel

Leah Pritchett, driving the Mopar/Pennzoil® Top Fuel dragster out of the Don Schumacher Racing stable, was unable to survive a first-round match with DSR teammate Tony Schumacher, driver of the Mopar-powered U.S. Army Top Fuel dragster. Pritchett left the starting line first with a very good .068-second reaction time to Schumacher's respectable .077, but she forfeited the lead by a smidge soon after launch. Schumacher made his quickest pass of the weekend for the win, 3.731/324.59 to 3.781/315.19. Schumacher's day ended in the quarterfinals when he came up on the wrong side of a pedal-fest with Steve Torrence.

"We wanted to have more success on the track today, and our Mopar/Pennzoil team produced another good run," said Pritchett, who remains in the top 10 in NHRA's Countdown to the Championship standings leaving Sonoma and is slated to race the remainder of the regular season leading up to Charlotte, where the Countdown kicks off in September. "With all of our DSR crew chiefs doing what they can to help us, we are going to qualify for the Countdown and then challenge for the world championship."

Mopar Dodge Dart Pro Stock Cars

Allen Johnson led the Mopar-powered Dodge Dart Pro Stock entries on raceday in Sonoma, and he powered his Marathon Petroleum-branded factory hot rod to the quarterfinals before succumbing to tire shake. Johnson, the Denver Mopar Mile-High Nationals winner and lifelong Mopar campaigner, qualified in the No. 6 position and raced to a stout 6.587-second pass at 209.72 mph to fly to victory over Aaron Strong's 6.609/210.44. Without lane choice, Johnson was at an immediate disadvantage in the following round, where Shane Gray went ahead for the win as Johnson's tires rattled loose from the racing surface.

Jeg Coughlin Jr., in the Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar Dodge Dart, had hoped for his third Sonoma win but fell in the first round to Chris McGaha, 6.593/209.88 to 6.603/209.39. Coughlin's Elite Motorsports teammate Erica Enders was unable to make the call in the first round and forfeited the match.

Johnson is No. 4 in the Pro Stock points, Coughlin is No. 9, and Enders is nine marks out of the No. 10 spot.

Next Up

NHRA's 2016 Mello Yello Drag Racing Series continues with race 16 of 24 on the circuit and the 29th annual NHRA Northwest Nationals in Kent, Wash., Aug. 5-7, 2016.

2016 NHRA Championship Point Standings

(Following the NHRA Sonoma Nationals event)

(season wins in parentheses, *clinched berth in NHRA Mello Yello Countdown to the Championship)

Pro Stock

1. Greg Anderson (7) – 1,587*
2. Jason Line (7) – 1,583*
3. Bo Butner – 1,065*

4. Allen Johnson (1), Mopar Dodge Dart – 939

5. Vincent Nobile – 811
6. Drew Skillman – 805
7. Shane Gray – 737
8. Chris McGaha – 718

9. Jeg Coughlin Jr., Dodge Dart – 644

10. Alex Laughlin – 627

11. Erica Enders, Mopar Performance Dodge Dart – 618

Funny Car

- 1. Ron Capps, Dodge Charger R/T (4) – 1,214**
2. Courtney Force (1) – 1,084
- 3. Jack Beckman, Dodge Charger R/T (1) – 976**
4. Del Worsham – 960
5. John Force (3) – 937
- 6t. Matt Hagan, Dodge Charger R/T (2) – 936**
- 6t. Robert Hight (1) – 936
- 8. Tommy Johnson Jr., Dodge Charger R/T (1) – 888**
9. Tim Wilkerson (2) – 827
10. Alexis DeJoria (1) – 765

Top Fuel

1. Antron Brown (3) – 1,204*
2. Doug Kalitta (3) – 1,167*
3. Steve Torrence (2) – 1,072*
4. Brittany Force (2) – 1,008*
- 5. Tony Schumacher, Mopar HEMI (1) – 971**
6. J.R. Todd (1) – 897
7. Shawn Langdon (2) – 836
8. Richie Crampton – 754
9. Clay Millican – 715
- 10. Leah Pritchett, Mopar HEMI (1) – 586**

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

Mopar is the global name for Stellantis genuine parts and authentic accessories.

A simple combination of the words MOTOtor and PARTs, Mopar offers exceptional service, parts and customer-care. Born in 1937 as the name of a line of antifreeze products, Mopar has evolved over more than 85 years to represent both complete vehicle care and authentic performance for owners and enthusiasts worldwide.

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