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## **Mopar and Dodge Nitro Drivers Hunt for Third Consecutive Win, 2017 Factory Stock Showdown Kicks Off at 48th Annual NHRA Gatornationals**

- Mopar-backed Funny Car and Top Fuel drivers each look for third win of season in class during prestigious NHRA Gatornationals at Gainesville Raceway
- Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak machines will take part in first of five Factory Stock Showdowns
- Official Dodge display trailer debuts on NHRA Manufacturers Midway
- Event serves as East Coast kickoff on NHRA national event calendar

March 15, 2017, Auburn Hills, Mich. - Florida's Gainesville Raceway has been synonymous with speed since 1969. For close to five decades, some of drag racing's most revered records have been set at the track's prestigious NHRA Gatornationals each March. This year, Mopar and Dodge will look to continue that tradition in both the Pro and Sportsman classes across four days of competition.

The four Mopar-backed Dodge Charger R/T Funny Cars from Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) are off to a stellar start on the young season and hope to carry that momentum into the first East Coast race on the 2017 NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series calendar. To kick off the year, two-time series champion Matt Hagan has collected two consecutive Wally trophies with wins in the NHRA Winternationals at Auto Club Raceway at Pomona and the Arizona Nationals at Wild Horse Pass Motorsports Park behind the wheel of his Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T. All four DSR Funny Cars currently sit in the top eight in the point standings.

In the Top Fuel ranks, DSR's Mopar drivers are off to as hot a start as their Funny Car brethren. Leah Pritchett won her hometown Winternationals in the Papa John's/Mopar Pennzoil Dragster, then followed it up two weeks later with a win in the Arizona Nationals for the second year in a row. She also set a new national elapsed-time record during qualifying for that event with a pass of 3.658 seconds at 329.34 mph. While Pritchett leads the point standings and her team is looking to make even more power in Gainesville, Tony Schumacher is solidly in the second spot in the Mopar-powered U.S. Army Dragster.

2016 Funny Car World Champion Ron Capps is the most recent Mopar-powered Dodge winner of the Gatornationals, claiming the event title in 2015. He is a three-time Gatornationals champion, while Tony Schumacher has won the event four times. One of Florida's favorite sons, drag racing pioneer and longtime Mopar driver Don Garlits, won the 1972, 1977, 1978 and 1986 editions of the event in Top Fuel. In 1986, he also broke the 270-mph barrier at his home track.

### **Factory Stock Showdown Gets Underway**

At Gainesville this year, many eyes will be on the Sportsman ranks when the first Factory Stock Showdown of 2017 takes to the track. Five events will take place throughout the year in which modern muscle cars from American manufacturers competing in Stock Eliminator are pitted head-to-head for trophies, cash prizes and bragging rights. Several Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak vehicles are on the entry list.

The Mopar-powered Factory Stock Showdown drivers will receive points toward the Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar Drag Pak Rewards program, which is designed specifically for Mopar Dodge Drag Pak racers. Competitors can still register for the program, which will reward the top 20 in points at the end of the season based on their performance in all national events. All Mopar Sportsman drivers are also eligible for monetary awards through the Mopar Contingency Program as well. Contingency rewards are available for drivers who compete and win with Mopar valve covers, intake manifolds and cylinder heads. The contingency decal is available at the Mopar display trailer.

In addition, the recently introduced Dodge Top Finisher award will provide \$500 to the highest finishing Dodge or Plymouth driver in both Stock and Super Stock competition in all 24 national events.

### **Dodge Display Trailer Debuts on Manufacturers Midway**

The Mopar display will be joined by the debut of the official Dodge display trailer on NHRA Manufacturers Midway at Gainesville. The Dodge display will feature a formidable lineup of vehicles from America's mainstream performance brand, including the Dodge Charger Hellcat, Dodge Durango R/T, Dodge Challenger R/T 392 Scat Pack Shaker, Dodge Charger R/T 392 Scat Pack and Dodge Viper GTC TA 1.0.

New for 2017, the addition of the Dodge display to the long-standing Mopar exhibit on NHRA Manufacturers Midway highlights the teaming of the brands in support of NHRA Sportsman racers and fans. The Mopar and Dodge display trailers will be on hand at 15 of the 24 stops on the national event calendar.

Fan-friendly activities will also be on tap at the Dodge display trailer, with additional interactive features to be added throughout the season. The Mopar exhibit will also offer fans a variety of unique activities and promotions, and will host Mopar Dodge driver autograph sessions at many events as well. The next autograph session is slated for 10:45 a.m. ET on Saturday, March 18 in Gainesville.

### **Mopar/Dodge Notes & Quotes**

#### **Matt Hagan, Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car**

"The Gators are a big event, it's the East Coast kick off and that place is packed. I remember going to the Gators when I was little and it being just such a big event; it's so full and there are so many people there. It's one that I haven't won yet and I'd like to check it off of my list.

"We've got some serious momentum rolling into Gainesville. The car's running good, the guys are confident. This new Mopar body came out and we tied our national record in miles per hour and E.T. Everybody seems focused and driven, but they all do when you win two races in a row and you're on top. But sometimes the thing about being on top is you find bottom really quick. So as good as things are going, you know that this sport is very humbling. I think you have to keep that in perspective.

"We're carrying this high right now but you also have to be prepared for the other side of it, too. I think we're mentally focused. So we're just living it up and loving it right now but we know that things are going to get tough and guys are going to try to catch up. We've just to keep fighting and digging and make sure this Mopar stays in the front."

#### **Leah Pritchett, Papa John's/Mopar Pennzoil Top Fuel Dragster**

"I think it would be really easy to get ahead of ourselves and focus on a third win of the season and make it a three-peat – something we've never done before. But honestly, we're going to go into it with the exact same mentality we had for Pomona, knowing we had a fast car from testing and continue to just take it round by round. We're going to be testing a couple of things when we go to the Gatornationals, but trying not to lose our lead and leave in the number one spot.

"I kind of feel like it's a new season all over again because for our fans, it's the East Coast debut. We're going to experience fans that have been waiting months and months to smell that nitro. It's going to have the same feeling as if we just went to Pomona, and we kind of thrived off that feeling. The Gainesville fans appreciate the heritage of the sport and of that racetrack, and they're so grassroots, they're camping out all weekend. There are thousands of them that bring a very positively contagious, hardcore drag racing feel. I feel like that matches where we're at right now."

#### **(On Representing Mopar in Gainesville)**

"This will be my first time going into the Gatornationals as someone wearing shoes with very big footsteps to fill. What Don [Garlits] has done there, breaking records on his way to the championships, and creating new technology along the way, inspires me. I would say the biggest word is I'm inspired by the confidence that Mopar has instilled in us and the resources they've provided. We already have our own set of goals, but that [being a Mopar driver] adds another one. I want to live up to and pick up where that success left off. So that's an additional goal of mine when I'm in that Mopar Top Fuel Dragster. It's a pretty phenomenal feeling."

### **Tune-In Info**

The 48th annual NHRA Gatornationals will be broadcast on FS1, with elimination rounds live on the network from 1 to 4 p.m. on Sunday, March 19.

For more information on Mopar and Dodge in NHRA, check out the Mopar brand's official blog, <http://blog.mopar.com/>.

### **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, thanks to Don Schumacher Racing driver Ron Capps, Mopar captured its fourth NHRA Funny Car World Championship in the last six years. As Mopar celebrates 80 years as a brand in 2017, it will focus its NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series efforts on NHRA Funny Car and, with rising star Leah Pritchett, NHRA Top Fuel Dragster. Mopar will also bolster its commitment to NHRA Sportsman racing with new contingency rewards, factory support and at-track technical advice and guidance.

### **Mopar-First Features**

- During the brand's 80 years, Mopar has introduced numerous industry-first features including:
- Vehicle-information apps: first to introduce smartphone vehicle-information applications, a new channel of communication with consumers
- wiADVISOR: first to incorporate a tablet-based service lane tool
- Electronic Vehicle Tracking System (EVTS): first to market with a new interactive vehicle tracking device that sends owner a text when vehicle is driven too fast or too far based on pre-set parameters
- Wi-Fi: first to offer customers the ability to make their vehicle a wireless hot spot
- Electronic owner manuals: first to introduce traditional owner manuals in a DVD and brief user-guide format

### **Mopar**

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

A simple combination of the words MOtor 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.

Mopar made its mark in the 1960s during the muscle-car era with performance parts to enhance speed and handling for both on-road and racing use. Later, Mopar expanded to include technical service and customer support, and today integrates service, parts and customer-care operations in order to enhance customer and dealer support worldwide.

Complete information on Mopar is available at [www.mopar.com](http://www.mopar.com) and the newly redesigned Mopar blog at [www.blog.mopar.com](http://www.blog.mopar.com). For more information regarding Stellantis (NYSE: STLA), please visit [www.stellantis.com](http://www.stellantis.com).

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