

Contact: Amy Knight

## **Schumacher Leads Mopar-powered Drivers at 48th Annual NHRA Gatornationals With 81st Career No. 1 Qualifier Position**

- Mopar-powered Tony Schumacher qualifies in No. 1 spot in Top Fuel for 81st time in his career
- Mopar power three-for-three in Top Fuel qualifying in 2017
- Five Dodge Charger R/T Funny Cars qualify for 16-car field
- Leah Pritchett defeats Papa John's Pizza founder and CEO John Schnatter in Charity Challenge match race
- Eileen Daniels presented with Pat Garlits Award at International Drag Racing Hall of Fame induction

March 18, 2017, Gainesville, Fla. - The Mopar and Dodge-backed teams out of the Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) stable continued their early-season roll during qualifying for the prestigious 48th annual NHRA Gatornationals at Gainesville Raceway. Eight-time Top Fuel champ Tony Schumacher set a track record for elapsed time during round two of qualifying on Friday with a pass of 3.682 seconds at 328.22 mph and held on through all of Saturday to claim the top spot on the ladder going into Sunday's eliminations. It's the 81st No. 1 qualifier position of his illustrious career.

His teammates in the DSR Funny Car ranks all put their Dodge Charger R/T machines in the top eight during qualifying, led by Matt Hagan's Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T in the No. 3 spot.

Leah Pritchett, winner of the first two Top Fuel events of 2017, will start from somewhere other than the No. 1 position for the first time this year in her Papa John's Pizza/ Mopar Pennzoil Dragster. Pritchett will begin from the seventh spot on the ladder.

### **Leah Pritchett Defeats Papa John's Pizza Founder John Schnatter in First Charity Challenge of 2017**

On five occasions throughout 2017, Leah Pritchett will participate in head-to-head match races with Papa John's Pizza founder and CEO, John Schnatter. Known as the Charity Challenge, the events benefit the Infinite Hero Foundation. In Gainesville, Pritchett was behind the wheel of a Dodge Challenger configured for drag racing and featuring a supercharged Mopar Gen III HEMI® engine under the hood. She bested Schnatter with a time of 9.560 seconds at 148.54 mph. The next Charity Challenge will take place at zMax Dragway in Charlotte on April 28-30 during the Four-Wide Nationals.

### **International Drag Racing Hall of Fame Induction**

During the 27th Annual Banquet and Induction Ceremony for the International Drag Racing Hall of Fame on Thursday evening, Mopar Motorsports Marketing Manager Dale Aldo helped honor Pat Garlits Memorial Award Presented by Mopar winner Eileen Daniels for her contributions to the sport. Daniels worked in NHRA Division 3 with her husband, Bob, and later they were involved with the operations of Indianapolis Raceway Park. After retiring to Florida, the Daniels' were instrumental in setting up NHRA "Hot Rod Reunion" events.

The award is named for longtime Dodge and Mopar driver Don Garlits' late wife, Pat. Don Garlits is a four-time Gatornationals winner and one of the sport's most iconic personalities. The Don Garlits Museum of Drag Racing and International Drag Racing Hall of Fame is located in Ocala.

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

(best elapsed time in bold)

### **Tony Schumacher, U.S. Army Top Fuel Dragster**

Qualified No. 1, will face No. 16 Smax Smith

*Friday:* (3.768 seconds at 325.22 mph – Q1); (**3.682**/328.22 – Q2)

*Saturday:* (3.710/324.36 – Q3); (3.798/266.06 – Q4)

"I am so proud of (crew chief) Mike (Green), (assistant crew chief) Phil (Shuler) and all the guys on the U.S. Army team. The preparation to come down to the Gatornationals, one of our biggest races, and be this good says a lot about their desire to win. Every run has been spot on and we're ready for tomorrow. We have a chance to make history and winning the Gatornationals would be a big one.

"If we can go out there and do what we did today and what we did yesterday, we might have a chance and that's all you can ask for. It would be a record that I wouldn't forget for a long, long time. As a kid, the Gatornationals was always one of the biggest races for my father. Here we are today with a great chance."

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

Qualified No. 7, will face No. 10 Scott Palmer

*Friday:* (No time, too light – Q1); (4.686 seconds at 142.09 mph – Q2);

*Saturday:* (**3.750**/327.66 – Q3); (4.571/165.72 – Q4)

"Most of our efforts are in our supercharger program, and our motor is so happy right now. Last night we were getting down the track on a mid .60s run, that's what we were shooting for, and we broke a rear end. That snapped our output shaft and the motor zinged up to almost 11 grand (rpm).

"We came back, and when you look at something like that, if your motor is struggling and you get anywhere close to being way over red like that, you sustain tons of damage. But for us, we came back and everything was fine, rods were in it, even the pistons weren't stretched. That shows that the type of power we are making is true power, it's not living on the edge. That's why I have confidence that what we run on the track is safe power, and we can attribute that to Mopar's help in development of parts."

#### **(On the Charity Challenge)**

"We're always looking for new ways to engage with the fans and what we just did is the epitome of drag racing. It's grudge racing. He (John Schnatter) does not like to lose. He might have a smile on his face right now, but he does not like to lose. I was running a Mopar Drag Pak-inspired Dodge Challenger, supercharged, and this weekend was the first time I ever even sat in the car. I thought it was difficult to do a shakedown run during a national event, in front of thousands of people and on TV. I have respect for what (John) did, he hasn't been in his car in about six months and he comes out here today straight out from what he was doing, gets in the car in front of everybody and tries to whip my butt.

"When I heard which charity we were going to be able to donate to, that touched my heart. I never thought that I would be a part of something like that."

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

Qualified No. 3, will face No. 14 Dave Richards

*Friday:* (No time; mechanical – Q1); (**3.854** seconds at 328.70 mph – Q2)

*Saturday:* (3.986/326.32 – Q3); (4.632/178.45 – Q4)

"Gainesville is just one of those tracks I haven't won at yet. It always seems to throw us a curve. Last night we had a fire, and the guys had to re-plumb everything and they were here until 1:30. It was a long night for them and an early morning again. For the car to come out and go down the racetrack this morning and get some data to build off of, you head into race day with some confidence.

"We've got a great team and a great crew chief, and my lights (reaction times) are where they need to be. As long as we keep this hot rod running, I think we'll be fine tomorrow."

#### **Tommy Johnson Jr., Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car**

Qualified No. 5, will face No. 12 Cruz Pedregon

*Friday:* (3.891 seconds at 327.98 mph – Q1); (**3.865**/329.83 – Q2)

*Saturday:* (4.444/195.34 – Q3); (3.896/328.30 – Q4)

### **Ron Capps, NAPA Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car**

Qualified No. 6, will face No. 11 Alexis DeJoria

*Friday:* (3.865 seconds at 329.58 mph – Q1); (4.302/204.66 – Q2)

*Saturday:* (4.291/205.66 – Q3); (3.927/325.69 – Q4)

### **Jack Beckman, Infinite Hero Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car**

Qualified No. 8, will face No. 9 Tim Wilkerson

*Friday:* (3.883 seconds at 321.27 mph – Q1); (10.014/74.73 – Q2)

*Saturday:* (4.382/204.48 – Q3); (3.897/330.23 – Q4)

### **Tune-In Info**

FS1 will broadcast the elimination rounds from the 48th Annual NHRA Gatornationals LIVE at 1 p.m. ET 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).

### **Follow Mopar and company news and video on:**

Company blog: [blog.stellantisnorthamerica.com](http://blog.stellantisnorthamerica.com)

Media website: [media.stellantisnorthamerica.com](http://media.stellantisnorthamerica.com)

Mopar brand: [www.mopar.com/](http://www.mopar.com/)

Mopar blog: [blog.mopar.com/](http://blog.mopar.com/)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/mopar](http://www.facebook.com/mopar)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/officialmopar](http://www.instagram.com/officialmopar)

Twitter: [twitter.com/OfficialMOPAR](http://twitter.com/OfficialMOPAR)

YouTube: [www.youtube.com/c/mopar](http://www.youtube.com/c/mopar) or [www.youtube.com/StellantisNA](http://www.youtube.com/StellantisNA)

-###-

Additional information and news from Stellantis are available at: <https://media.stellantisnorthamerica.com>