

## **Pritchett and Capps Give Mopar and Dodge Third 2017 Nitro Double-Up in Houston, Helms Wins Stock in Dodge Challenger**

- Leah Pritchett takes third Top Fuel win of year and fourth of her career in Papa John's Pizza/Mopar Pennzoil Dragster at 30th annual NHRA SpringNationals
- Mopar driver Ron Capps wins 50th career Funny Car event in HEMI®-powered Dodge Charger R/T
- Mopar claims both Top Fuel and Funny Car wins for the third time in five events in 2017
- Two Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Funny Cars advance to semifinals
- Mopar and Dodge maintain top spot in both Top Fuel and Funny Car point standings
- Six Dodge Charger R/T Funny Cars compete in 16-car field
- Kevin Helms wins Stock Eliminator and advances to final in Super Stock, wins A/SA in Stock class eliminations
- Helms claims Dodge Top Finisher award in Stock and Super Stock

April 23, 2017, Baytown, Texas - Mopar HEMI® power remains on a roll in the NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series, with Mopar and Dodge drivers Leah Pritchett and Ron Capps claiming the Top Fuel and Funny Car wins, respectively, during the NHRA SpringNationals at Royal Purple Raceway near Houston. The wins mark the third dual victories for Mopar-powered Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) machines in the Nitro category through five events in 2017, and the fourth Mopar win in each class overall.

There is perhaps no one having a better spring than Leah Pritchett. She won her third Top Fuel Wally of the year and the fourth of her career at Royal Purple Raceway, piloting her HEMI-powered Papa John's Pizza Mopar/Pennzoil Dragster to the victory against Steve Torrence. Pritchett won the final from the right lane, laying down a lap of 3.781 seconds at 321.96 mph with a .049-second reaction time. Torrence's pass was a 3.787 at 322.11 after a reaction time of .058.

Meanwhile it was just a matter of time before Pritchett's DSR teammate Capps found the winner's circle this season. The 2016 Funny Car champion won the final round in his Dodge Charger R/T with a spectacular explosion as he crossed the finish line to claim his 50th career Funny Car win and 51st Nitro victory overall. The victory is his first since Seattle in 2016 and fourth at Royal Purple Raceway.

Capps defeated Robert Hight from the right lane as Hight crossed the center line on his pass, making for one of the wildest Funny Car finishes in recent memory. Capps turned in a lap of 4.004 seconds at 284.33 mph after a .060-second reaction time. Hight made a pass of 4.107 at 202.88 with a .057 reaction time off the starting line.

Another Mopar driver also had a weekend to remember in two Sportsman categories, as multiple-time Stock world champion Kevin Helms took home the Wally in Stock Eliminator and went to the final in Super Stock driving two separate late model Dodge Challengers.

In Top Fuel, Leah Pritchett started in the No. 6 spot on the ladder and drove to a first-round win over Scott Palmer, who lost a cylinder during his pass. Pritchett went on to face Doug Kalitta in a rematch of round two at the Gatornationals in March. This time Pritchett came out the victor after a holeshot win. She then took on defending Top Fuel champ Antron Brown in a rematch of the semifinals in Las Vegas, and narrowly bested Brown to reach the final round against Torrence.

In Funny Car, Capps qualified No. 2 overall and turned in consistent runs throughout the first three elimination rounds.

He first beat Todd Simpson who instantly smoked the tires, then turned on the win light against Swedish driver Jonnie Lindberg in round two, where Lindberg went up in smoke just past half track. He then knocked out his DSR and Mopar teammate Jack Beckman in the semis to advance to the final.

Beckman drove his Infinite Hero Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car to a round one win over DSR teammate Matt Hagan's Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T. Hagan, who claimed his first Funny Car win at Royal Purple Raceway in 2010, faced issues and smoked the tires early in the run. Beckman had to pedal the car but still claimed the win. He went on to beat the legendary John Force in round two with a very solid pass as Force dropped a cylinder and nearly hit the wall in the left lane near the finish line. Beckman's day finally came to an end in the semifinals when he dropped a cylinder and was beaten by Mopar and DSR teammate Capps.

Tommy Johnson Jr. meanwhile had cylinder issues in the first round, forcing him to lift during his run and his Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car was bested by Lindberg. In the most recent event Johnson defeated Lindberg in the final to win the NHRA Nationals in Las Vegas, but the roles were reversed in Texas.

Eight-time Top Fuel champion Tony Schumacher advanced to the second round in his U.S. Army Dragster featuring Mopar power. Schumacher defeated Troy Buff in the first round after Buff had mechanical issues off the starting line, then lost to No. 1 qualifier Clay Millican on a holeshot with Millican's margin of victory at just .001 seconds.

Royal Purple Raceway is known for fast speeds due to its proximity to Trinity Bay, which provides the facility with fresh air. Conditions were ideal during raceday with clear skies and low track and air temperatures, leading to some quick and fast runs. However, the well-known Texas humidity prevented teams from making multiple record-breaking passes during both days of qualifying.

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

#### **[Pietro Gorlier, Head of Parts and Service \(Mopar\) FCA – Global](#)**

"We're extremely proud to take home dual wins for the third time this season. Congratulations to Dodge Charger R/T driver Ron Capps on the Funny Car victory and Leah Pritchett on the Top Fuel win in the Papa John's Pizza/Mopar Pennzoil Dragster at the NHRA Spring Nationals. This is not an easy feat. The accomplishment is a testament to the hard work of everyone involved with the Mopar motorsports program."

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

**(No. 6 Qualifier – 3.747 seconds at 326.87 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.102-second reaction time, 3.748 seconds at 324.59 mph) defeated No. 11 Scott Palmer (.109/4.766/152.22)

Rd. 2: (.059/3.763/324.05 – holeshot win) defeated No. 3 Doug Kalitta (.072/3.759/326.56)

Semis: (.083/3.772/319.45) defeated No. 2 Antron Brown (.065/3.815/322.11)

Final: (.049/3.781/321.96) defeated No. 4 Steve Torrence (.058/3.787/322.11)

"I would say the meter is as much pegged as it was from winning Pomona and then winning Phoenix. I fell off at Gainesville and we didn't make it to the final in Vegas, but we were saying going into the final, 'this is our bounce back.' I know we want to keep it interesting and everything but our goal was to leave a points leader and that was not easy at all. Antron (Brown) gave us a total run for the money and obviously so did Steve (Torrence). I've never been in a position to really be counting points and it's so early in the season, but I'm definitely enjoying that. My mentality was honestly there's a select number of drivers that I really, really get up for. I know Steve very well, a great family friend and all of that. I knew he was going to be after me.

"DSR has really shown that we have the proper ingredients for success and I'm a small a part of that. I'm very privileged and proud and blessed to be able to be standing here today."

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

**(No. 2 Qualifier – 3.884 seconds at 326.56 mph)**

Rd 1: (.104-second reaction time, 3.897 seconds at 327.90 mph) defeated No. 15 Todd Simpson (.046/11.347/81.01)

Rd 2: (.071/3.951/321.04) defeated No. 10 Jonnie Lindberg (.065/5.159/153.63)

Semis: (.057/3.926/325.37) defeated No. 6 Jack Beckman (.079/6.126/114.85)

Final: (.060/4.004/284.33) defeated No. 4 Robert Hight (.057/4.107/202.88)

"We knew we were up against a tough car, but we were a little off going into that round. I knew (crew chief Rahn) Tobler had tuned it up a little bit. I think we're the only car that went down all eight runs under power which is a huge compliment to Rahn Tobler, especially considering the Friday first session and Saturday first session and the humidity and the heat. I couldn't see the win light because of the fire so I wasn't sure who won. So I brought it to a stop. It was a Sportsman guy loading his car up off the track that finally gave me the thumbs up.

"This track has been so good to me. I came here as a rookie in Top Fuel in 1995 and just fell in love with the place and the people. It was built as a super track and it still holds its own so it's a big win for us.

"My favorite part about winning the championship is the fact that we're going to these racetracks where I haven't seen these fans. So every race we've gone to this year it's like winning the championship all over again when I show up to the track every day. There were so many fans when I walked out there that I recognized from last year. It's neat. It's going to be a fun year going to all these tracks. It's like winning (the championship) over every Friday morning.

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

**(No. 11 Qualifier – 3.974 seconds at 322.19 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.089-second reaction time, 5.142 seconds at 162.12 mph), lost to No. 6 Jack Beckman (.083/4.224/222.62)

"We just had a mistake here. We tested some stuff in Vegas and rolled in here with it and we probably should have left that other stuff in there. We're going to stick to what we won two races with and a bunch of other rounds. So we're going back to that. It just bit us – that's all. Lesson learned and we move forward. That's just drag racing. A lot of racing is still left and Charlotte is my home track. My entire family will be down there for the next weekend coming up. So I'm pretty pumped about that and just going to roll on with it."

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

**(No. 6 Qualifier – 3.907 seconds at 327.90 mph)**

Rd 1: (.083-second reaction time, 4.224 seconds at 222.62 mph) defeated No. 11 Matt Hagan (.089/5.142/162.12)

Rd. 2: (.052/3.897/329.18) defeated No. 3 John Force (.036/4.134/273.39)

Semis: (.079/6.126/114.85) lost to No. 2 Ron Capps (.057/3.926/325.37)

"I'm pretty sure it's our first semi of the year so it's a nice feeling to start going deep into Sunday. It's no fun to go out second round and start loading up. But you know, they give us 24 shots a year. It's going to be more important during the Countdown which is the last six races, but boy you don't want to just keep burning Sundays and leaving without a trophy. The light at the end of the tunnel is we made several good runs in a row here. We made three solid runs in qualifying. We stumbled first round but we didn't miss it by much. (We) came back and ran low ET of second round. And then third round something bit us that doesn't normally happen. It put a cylinder out right at the step of the throttle. We've just got to figure out what's enough fuel to make it move fast and not too much that it floods out a spark plug. I think now we're starting to get more and more data.

"I said we need thirty runs to the finish line to accumulate data and to figure out what this car needs from us. We got several more this weekend so there's a silver lining. We're going to be in good shape."

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

**(No. 7 Qualifier – 3.934 seconds at 320.05 mph)**

Rd.1: (.059-second reaction time, 4.556 seconds at 190.16 mph) lost to No. 10 Jonnie Lindberg (.069/3.944/326.16)

"It's definitely frustrating to go out first round. We have such a great team and we know we can do better. It was just a tricky racetrack out there first round. There were some good runs but there was also a lot of tire smoke. Unfortunately, this round we were on the wrong side of that. Normally, we shine when conditions are like that. We were just a little off all weekend. We were kind of doing catch up all weekend long. The problem was on Sunday, we

didn't have enough good data from qualifying for a winning tune-up on race day.

"We'll regroup, come out swinging at the Four-Wide. Charlotte is kind of a home race for me. All my family lives there now and will come out. We've done well there in the past there so I'm looking forward to it."

**Tony Schumacher, U.S. Army Top Fuel Dragster**  
**(No. 8 Qualifier – 3.783 seconds at 316.67 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.088-second reaction time, 3.758 seconds at 322.11 mph) defeated No. 9 Troy Buff (no time -mechanical)  
Rd. 2: (.085/3.779/317.34) lost to No. 1 Clay Millican (.079/3.784/320.97 – holeshot win)

"I hit a bump down the track and it got the tires spinning just enough. There are 10,000 ways to win when you get beat by a thousandth of a second. Lots of little things you can do to change things. I can hit the gas a little quicker. The car can run a little better. I can keep it a little straighter. Miss that bump. Over and over, you kind of get frustrated, you always go back in your mind after a race like that and want to do it again and hit the gas quicker.

"I've got to get it together and hit the gas sooner. I've had one red light the last 20 years for a reason – I don't push it. Most people push it; I'm going to start pushing it. I've never had the best lights but I've won eight championships without pushing that part of my game. I believe in driving the car straight and I believe being calm and cool and meticulously understanding your machine, keeping it from being unsettled is more important."

**Mopar/Dodge NHRA Sportsman Spotlight**

Four-time Stock world champion Kevin Helms of Schriever, Louisiana, once again proved his prowess in the Sportsman ranks by piloting two different Dodge Challengers from his Southland Dodge team throughout the weekend en route to winning Stock Eliminator and advancing to the final round of Super Stock.

Helms won the Stock class in his A/SA 2013 Dodge Challenger R/T with a final-round lap of 10.096 seconds at 121.74 mph on a 10.08 dial-in paired with a 0.30-second reaction time. He defeated Austin Ford's FS/A 2016 Mustang.

In Super Stock, Helms advanced to the final in his FSS/E 2010 Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak, where he broke out on a pass of 9.383 seconds at 120.15 mph on a 9.39 dial-in after a .026-second reaction time. A double breakout gave the win to Norvell Bowers' GT/OA '83 Pontiac Firebird.

For his efforts, Helms earned the Dodge Top Finisher award, a program in place at all 24 NHRA national events this year providing the highest finishing Dodge or Plymouth driver in the Stock and Super Stock class with \$500.

The SpringNationals also featured class eliminations in the Stock category on Friday where a number of Mopar-powered drivers turned in strong showings, with four taking home Wally trophies. Helms drove his 2013 Dodge Challenger R/T to victory in the A/SA category, while Southland Dodge owner Jeff Teuton of Houton, Louisiana, took his 2010 Dodge Challenger R/T to the victory in F/SA. Sammy Lusco, also of Houma, won H/SA in his '96 Dodge Dakota, and Tim Ames from League City, Texas, took his '71 Plymouth Duster powered by a 340 to the win in Combo-Stick.

**Next Event**

The NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series makes its first of two yearly trips to zMAX Dragway next weekend for the 8th annual NHRA Four-Wide Nationals on April 28 – 30. Built in 2008 and known as the "Bellagio of Drag Strips," zMax is located in Concord, North Carolina, just outside of Charlotte, putting it in one of America's motorsports capitals. zMAX Dragway is the only four-lane concrete drag strip in the world, providing an all-out spectacle for fans and an added challenge for drivers and crews. It is also home to the NHRA Carolina Nationals in September, the first event in the Countdown to the Championship.

Mopar Funny Car drivers Jack Beckman and Matt Hagan each have three wins at the track, while Tony Schumacher has claimed two wins in Top Fuel. The NHRA Four-Wide Nationals will be broadcast throughout the weekend on FOX Sports 1, with the elimination rounds televised at 5:30 p.m. ET on Sunday, April 30.

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

### 2017 NHRA Championship — Point Standings After Round 5 of 24

(Season Wins in Parentheses)

#### **NHRA Funny Car**

- 1. Matt Hagan, Dodge Charger R/T (2) – 400**
- 2. Ron Capps, Dodge Charger R/T (1) – 398**
3. John Force (1) – 371
- 4. Tommy Johnson Jr. Dodge Charger R/T (1) – 357**
- 5t. Courtney Force – 301
- 5t. Robert Hight – 301
- 7. Jack Beckman Dodge Charger R/T – 282**
8. Jonnie Lindberg – 235
9. J.R. Todd – 222
- 10. Jim Campbell Dodge Charger R/T – 211**

#### **NHRA Top Fuel**

- 1. Leah Pritchett, Mopar HEMI (3) – 492**
2. Antron Brown (1) – 440
- 3. Tony Schumacher, Mopar HEMI (1) – 438**
4. Doug Kalitta – 358
5. Steve Torrence – 352
6. Brittany Force – 282
7. Clay Millican – 269
8. Troy Coughlin Jr. – 228
9. Terry McMillen 195
10. Scott Palmer - 180

#### **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 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.

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 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>