

## **Johnson, Capps, Schumacher Turn in Second-Round Finishes for Mopar and Dodge at NHRA Carolina Nationals**

- Tommy Johnson Jr. and Ron Capps drive Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Funny Cars from Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) to second-round finishes in 10th annual NHRA Carolina Nationals at zMAX Dragway
- Tony Schumacher goes to second round in U.S. Army Top Fuel dragster featuring HEMI® power from DSR
- Capps is second in points in Funny Car, Schumacher sits fifth in Top Fuel standings to lead Mopar as six-race NHRA Countdown to the Championship begins
- Jack Zimmerman claims Dodge Top Finisher honors in Stock Eliminator, Ray Thurston takes Super Stock Eliminator award

September 17, 2017, Concord, N.C. - Three Mopar-powered teams from Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) opened the NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series Countdown to the Championship playoffs with second-round finishes in the 10th annual Carolina Nationals at zMAX Dragway near Charlotte.

Tommy Johnson Jr. and Ron Capps went to the second round in their Dodge Charger R/T Funny Cars from DSR, while Tony Schumacher turned a second-round performance in his Mopar-powered Top Fuel dragster from the DSR stable. It was the first time all year that at least one car featuring HEMI® power didn't reach at least the semifinals of the Nitro categories, and just the third time that at least one Mopar Funny Car didn't reach the final round.

Johnson began his day as the No. 3 qualifier and started Sunday eliminations by driving his Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T past Dave Richards. Richards had a parachute fall out on the starting line, giving Johnson a solo. The Make-A-Wish team next took on eventual event winner Robert Hight, where Johnson lost traction halfway through his run as Hight drove away.

Johnson's teammate Capps opened the defense of his 2016 title by defeating Tim Wilkerson in round one, despite losing traction as Wilkerson hit the wall and had his time disallowed. Capps next faced J.R. Todd in a rematch of the final round from the U.S. Nationals two weeks ago in Indianapolis. Todd left the starting lane first and defeated Capps on a holeshot.

The other two Mopar Funny Cars from DSR were bested in the first round. Matt Hagan's Mopar/Freightliner Dodge Charger R/T fell to Hight as Hagan's car lost cylinders down track. Jack Beckman also was defeated in round one at the hands of Dodge driver Jim Campbell. Campbell was late on the Christmas Tree but Beckman went for a wild ride in the Infinite Hero Dodge Charger R/T and nearly crossed the center line, forcing him to get off the gas.

In the Top Fuel category, Tony Schumacher and the U.S. Army team from DSR first took down Shawn Langdon to set up a showdown with No. 1 qualifier and ultimate event winner Doug Kalitta, where Schumacher was barely defeated at the finish line.

Meanwhile, Leah Pritchett's Papa John's Pizza/Mopar Pennzoil Top Fuel dragster featuring special FireAde branding suffered a first-round upset, falling to Australian Wayne Newby when Pritchett smoked the tires early and could never catch up. It was just the second round-one loss all season for Pritchett in her dragster from DSR.

The 10th annual NHRA Carolina Nationals took place on an extremely hot track throughout the weekend, creating difficult conditions for crews and drivers throughout all categories.

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

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

**(No. 3 Qualifier – 3.901 seconds at 325.06 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.130-second reaction time, 4.064 seconds at 272.45 mph) defeated No. 14 Dave Richards (no time – mechanical)

Rd. 2: (.048/4.315/216.65) lost to No. 6 Robert Hight (.069/3.951/328.22)

“We obviously didn’t go as far as we wanted today but it was a positive. A lot of people who lost first round I’m sure would’ve liked to have won. We’ll continue to work at it and go into Reading. We won that race last year and ran really well. That gives you a little confidence coming in. With the way we’re coming back from a struggle at Indy I’m pretty positive the performance will continue to increase. Being the No. 3 qualifier here puts us in a good position. If we can go there (to Reading) and continue to do the same, I think the results will follow.”

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

**(No. 10 Qualifier – 3.980 seconds at 323.04 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.061-second reaction time, 4.363 seconds at 216.24 mph) defeated No. 7 Wilkerson (no time - contacted wall)

Rd. 2: (.080/3.968/323.50) lost to No. 2 J.R. Todd (.056/3.975/321.81 – holeshot win)

“All things considered, this was one of those weekends where we had to grind it out. We obviously had to shut the car off Q2 on Friday night, with the best conditions which would basically set the field. We didn’t qualify where we wanted but again, that shows what our team can do. With no lane choice and up against one of the toughest guys, Tim Wilkerson, we got a win first round. Then to go up and run a .96 in the left lane (in the second round) when no Funny Cars even went down, to run a .96 was a great run. It hurts and it hurts us in points but we will definitely bounce back from it. It’s just good to know that we have a good hot rod.”

**Matt Hagan, Mopar/Freightliner Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car**

**(No. 11 Qualifier – 3.981 seconds at 324.12 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.045-second reaction time, 4.254 seconds at 228.96 mph) lost to No. 6 Robert Hight (.054/3.927/326.95)

“It’s a super tough loss in the Countdown, but you know what, there are going to be other guys that go out first round here and there. We’ve just got to make them count when we can. The right lane obviously was better and they (Hight’s team) had lane choice. Running that car you know you have to set up to push. We pushed and it just didn’t stick. It just came down to obviously getting a little behind in qualifying and not having lane choice first round. It is what it is. We’ll move on to Reading and make these next five count.”

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

**(No. 3 Qualifier – 3.725 seconds at 327.98 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.086-second reaction time, 4.172 seconds at 300.06 mph) lost to No. 14 Wayne Newby (.038/3.827/313.66)

“If there’s a time to have our second first round loss of the entire season, this was not it. But I believe in our car. The most frustrating part about it, beyond the loss itself, is just three runs in a row (including qualifying) smoking the tires, which is something this team has never done in its existence. We’re unsure why. We haven’t really had gremlins at all this year and there’s something going on. At this moment we don’t know what it is. Between now and Reading I have no question in my mind the capabilities of this team to figure it out. Coming up from behind for a championship chase is what it’s going to take, and that’s what we’re ready for.”

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

**(No. 4 Qualifier – 3.906 seconds at 330.47 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.089-second reaction time, 4.539 seconds at 225.82 mph) lost to No. 13 Jim Campbell (.423/4.189/295.85)

“I just hope that this one doesn’t come back to bite us at the end of the year. You can’t not take advantage of that big of an opportunity. If someone had told me that you’re going to race the No. 13 car and you’re going to have a

reaction time of more than three tenths better than them, you get a free head start, I would have thought it's a one hundred percent shot that we win the race and we smoked the tires. I pedaled, and it started to move over towards the center line and I didn't want to take the cones out, so I lifted early and we lost by 16 thousandths of a second. If we would have lost by a second, it wouldn't have stung this bad because I feel like if I would have done a better job of pedaling the car, we would have been 17 thousandths ahead and we would have still been able to salvage the win light."

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

**(No. 9 Qualifier – 3.788 seconds at 325.30 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.047-second reaction time, 3.765 seconds at 325.45 mph) defeated No. 9 Shawn Langdon (.043/4.073/286.62)

Rd. 2: (.065/3.791/325.61) lost to No. 1 Doug Kalitta (.055/3.775/325.53)

"The big picture is that we have a good U.S. Army car. We are finally starting to run right. Yes, we got beat second round, but the guys ahead of us also lost early. It's going to bunch everyone up in the top six or seven. It's tough, because we could have left here with the lead in the Countdown when you see all the other teams you are chasing go out. Unfortunately, we let that one slip away. The good news is we get to get right back at it next week with momentum."

### **Mopar/Dodge NHRA Sportsman Spotlight**

The NHRA Carolina Nationals featured a deep field of Sportsman competitors, with Mopar power turning in solid performances in the Stock Eliminator and Super Stock Eliminator categories.

In Stock Eliminator, Jack Zimmerman of Clemmons, North Carolina, advanced to the third round in his B/SA 1971 Dodge Challenger R/T featuring a 440 Six Pack V8. There he made his best pass of the elimination rounds despite being bested by just two feet. Zimmerman turned in a 10.407-second lap on a 10.40 dial-in with a speed of 125.30 mph. He had a .067-second reaction time.

In Super Stock Eliminator, Clarence, New York's Ray Thurston put his FSS/H 2009 Challenger in the second round, before bowing out after a pass of 10.198 on a 10.15 dial-in at 123.35. He left the starting line with a reaction time of just .004.

Zimmerman and Thurston were each named the Dodge Top Finisher of the event. The program provides \$500 to the Stock Eliminator and Super Stock Eliminator drivers who advance the farthest at all 24 NHRA national events in a Dodge or Plymouth vehicle. Zimmerman also won the award during the Four-Wide Nationals at zMAX Dragway in the spring.

In class racing during the Carolina Nationals, David Collette of Perryville, Maryland, took home a Wally trophy with the FSS/F victory in his '11 Challenger, while Thomas Baker Jr. from Kingsville, Maryland, won SS/GA in his '70 Plymouth Barracuda.

### **Up Next: Dodge NHRA Nationals**

Next week the NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series heads to Pennsylvania for the 33rd annual Dodge NHRA Nationals at famed Maple Grove Raceway outside of Reading. Mopar power dominated the event last season, with Tommy Johnson Jr. winning an all-Mopar Funny Car final over teammate Ron Capps. Matt Hagan meanwhile was the No. 1 qualifier and set the track speed record, reaching 333.99 mph, while Jack Beckman set the Funny Car elapsed-time record during the weekend with a pass of 3.850 seconds. Mopar's Leah Pritchett was also the No. 1 qualifier in Top Fuel.

Beckman and Johnson each have two Funny Car wins at the track, while Hagan has visited the winner's circle once. Mopar-powered Tony Schumacher has claimed five victories there in Top Fuel.

The Dodge NHRA Nationals are scheduled for September 21 – 24, with coverage on FOX Sports 1 throughout the weekend. The elimination rounds will air on FS1 on Sunday, September 24, with LIVE coverage beginning at 2 p.m. ET.

For the second consecutive year, the event will kick off with the Mopar Mega Block Party on the evening of Thursday, September 21. A home run derby, Mopar autograph session, live bands and much more are on tap for the family-friendly event at FirstEnergy Stadium in Reading. All festivities are free and open to the public.

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 19 of 24**

(Season Wins in Parentheses)

#### **NHRA Funny Car**

1. Robert Hight (3) – 2,197
- 2. Ron Capps, Dodge Charger R/T (6) – 2,153**
3. Courtney Force – 2,141
- 4. Tommy Johnson Jr., Dodge Charger R/T (1) – 2,107**
- 5t. Matt Hagan, Dodge Charger R/T (3) – 2,102**
- 5t. J.R. Todd (2) – 2,102
- 7. Jack Beckman, Dodge Charger R/T (2) – 2,095**
8. John Force (1) – 2,085
9. Tim Wilkerson – 2,046
10. Cruz Pedregon – 2,033

#### **NHRA Top Fuel**

1. Doug Kalitta – (1) 2,173
2. Steve Torrence (7) – 2,159
3. Antron Brown (4) – 2,135
4. Brittany Force (1) – 2,117
- 5. Tony Schumacher, Mopar HEMI (1) – 2,115**
6. Clay Millican (1) – 2,110
- 7. Leah Pritchett, Mopar HEMI (4) – 2,108**
8. Terry McMillen – 2,051
9. Scott Palmer – 2,042
10. Shawn Langdon – 2,036

#### **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 on a smartphone app

#### **About Mopar**

Mopar (a simple contraction of the words MOtor and PARTs) is the service, parts and customer-care brand for FCA vehicles around the globe. Born in 1937 as the name of a line of antifreeze products, the Mopar brand has evolved

over more than 80 years to represent both complete care and authentic performance for owners and enthusiasts worldwide.

Mopar made its mark in the 1960s during the muscle-car era, with Mopar Performance Parts to enhance speed and handling for both road and racing use, and expanded to include technical service and customer support. Today, the Mopar brand's global reach distributes more than 500,000 parts and accessories in over 150 markets around the world. With more than 50 parts distribution centers and 25 customer contact centers globally, Mopar integrates service, parts and customer-care operations in order to enhance customer and dealer support worldwide.

Mopar is the source for genuine parts and accessories for all FCA US LLC vehicle brands. Mopar parts are engineered together with the same teams that create factory-authorized specifications for FCA vehicles, offering a direct connection that no other aftermarket parts company can provide. Complete information on the Mopar brand is available at [www.mopar.com](http://www.mopar.com).

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