

## **Record-tying 30-car Field Set to Battle for NHRA Dodge HEMI® Challenge Title at U.S. Nationals**

*Event marks 50th anniversary of 1968 Super Stock Dodge Dart and Plymouth Barracuda*

- Dodge brand celebrates first year of title sponsorship in 18th consecutive season of fan-favorite event
- Current entries to compete for \$15,000 winner's purse include drivers from 17 states and two countries
- Two-time defending champion James Daniels guns for record third consecutive win
- NHRA Dodge HEMI® Challenge qualifying and eliminations scheduled for August 30-31
- Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak drivers look to continue recent Factory Stock dominance at U.S. Nationals
- Mopar Dodge//SRT NHRA Funny Car, Top Fuel drivers focus on playoff berth positioning at Indy
- Dodge Challenger SRT Demon Simulator "Drag Strip Showdown" fan contest continues at U.S. Nationals

August 23, 2018, Auburn Hills, Mich. - A record-tying 30 drivers hailing from 17 states will gather at Lucas Oil Raceway at Indianapolis on August 30-31 to fight it out in the NHRA Dodge HEMI® Challenge, held during the historic NHRA U.S. Nationals, August 29 – September 3. The victor's Wally trophy will have even more of a "golden" luster this year, as 2018 also marks the 50th anniversary celebration of the Mopar-powered 1968 Dodge Dart and Plymouth Barracuda Super Stock cars that compete in the fan-favorite event.

The current field of entries, matching the largest in the event's 18-year history, will duke it out for the iconic, 42.6-lb NHRA Dodge HEMI Challenge trophy, created as a callout to the 426 HEMI engine, and the \$15,000 winner's purse. Three returning Indy HEMI Challenge champions will be among those vying for the win in the first event with Dodge as title sponsor, including two-time and defending champion James Daniels in his Dodge Dart, 2015 winner and Plymouth 'Cuda pilot Lloyd Wofford and inaugural 2001 HEMI Challenge race winner Bucky Hess.

Also joining the 22-year-old Daniels in the mix for the 2018 title will be last year's runner-up and New Brunswick, Canada, native Wendell Howes, one of three Canadian competitors who will run at Indy. Stephen Hebert, runner-up in 2016, will lead a crew of five drivers with Louisiana roots, the largest turnout from a single state, followed by three representatives each from Pennsylvania and Ohio. The "Fish" cars will have numbers on their side: 21 Plymouth 'Cudas will square off with nine Dodge Dart entries.

All NHRA Dodge HEMI Challenge competitors will be parked together in the Lucas Oil Raceway pit area. All drivers finishing in the top 16 will receive cash rewards. A parade of HEMI Challenge cars will take place Friday morning, August 31, before eliminations commence, with the final round to crown the 2018 champion scheduled for prime time on Friday night, just prior to NHRA Nitro qualifying.

The NHRA Dodge HEMI Challenge showcases Super Stock/A-HEMI (SS/AH) NHRA Sportsman class competitors battling on the quarter-mile in 1968 Mopar "package" cars, powered by the legendary 426 HEMI engine, nicknamed the "Elephant" engine for its size and power. The Dodge Dart and Plymouth Barracuda Super Stockers are one of the earliest and most iconic iterations of the purpose-built vehicles created at the factory. The cars feature distinct race "packages" and are for use solely on the drag strip. The Dodge Dart and Plymouth Barracudas are precursors to the modern-day package car — the Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak.

### **Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak drivers aim to maintain Factory Stock Showdown dominance**

Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak drivers will see their first NHRA Factory Stock Showdown competition since a historically dominant performance at the NHRA Norwalk, Ohio, event in late June, in which Drag Pak racers swept the

top four qualifying spots and claimed victory in the first-ever all-Mopar Dodge Factory Stock final round.

Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak drivers Mark Pawuk, runner-up at Norwalk, and Leah Pritchett, who will again pull double-duty in Top Fuel and Factory Stock, are seeking their first class wins. Joe Welch, owner of back-to-back Factory Stock wins, will go for three in a row at Indy. Pro Stock champion Allen Johnson raced to the quarterfinals at Norwalk, his best outing since his transition to Factory Stock, and will look to advance deeper in the field. Geoff Turk made history in his Drag Pak earlier this year by becoming the first driver to break into the seven-second range in a Factory Stock car and will also return to action at the U.S. Nationals.

#### **Mopar Dodge//SRT NHRA Nitro drivers jockey for Countdown to the Championship playoff positioning**

Heading into the U.S. Nationals, the final event prior to the start of the six-race NHRA Countdown to the Championship, all six of the DSR Mopar Dodge//SRT teams in NHRA Funny Car and Top Fuel are locked into top-10 playoff berths, with only their final positions left to be determined.

Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car driver Matt Hagan, the 2016 Indy winner, and Infinite Hero Dodge pilot Jack Beckman, the 2015 champion, have eyes on visiting winner's circle for the second time at Lucas Oil Raceway at Indianapolis. Their DSR Funny Car teammates Ron Capps, runner-up last year, and Tommy Johnson Jr. are searching for their first victories at the venue. Also hoping to lock down that first Indy Wally trophy is Mopar Dodge Top Fuel driver Leah Pritchett, while her teammate Tony Schumacher aims to add to his record 10 U.S. Nationals event wins.

Five rounds of NHRA Funny Car and Top Fuel qualifying will take place August 31 – September 2, with elimination rounds set for Labor Day Monday, September 3.

#### **Dodge Challenger SRT Demon Simulator “Drag Strip Showdown” to continue in Indy**

Visitors to the Mopar Dodge//SRT fan display at the U.S. Nationals can try their luck at the “Drag Strip Showdown,” a head-to-head competition in Dodge Challenger SRT Demon simulators. The contest runs through November 11, and will send the top four drivers with the best race times on a trip to the Dodge//SRT Bondurant Drag Racing School near Phoenix. Winners will be paired with either Mopar Dodge NHRA racers Leah Pritchett or Matt Hagan for a final competition that will take place at Bondurant in the actual 840-horsepower Dodge Challenger SRT Demon vehicle – the most powerful muscle car ever.

The “Drag Strip Showdown” includes stops at Dodge-sponsored NHRA races throughout the country, as well as at the Mopar exhibit at the 2018 Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) show in Las Vegas, set for October 30 – November 2. Two additional winners will be randomly selected by entering the “Drag Strip Showdown” online sweepstakes component of the promotion at [Dodge Garage](#), which also features a current leaderboard of the top-four drivers in the contest.

#### **About Dodge//SRT**

Dodge//SRT offers a complete lineup of performance vehicles that stand out in their own segments. Dodge is America's mainstream performance brand and SRT is positioned as the ultimate performance halo of the Dodge brand, together creating a complete and balanced performance brand with one vision and one voice.

For more than 100 years, the Dodge brand has carried on the spirit of brothers John and Horace Dodge, who founded the brand in 1914. Their influence continues today. New for 2019, the Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat Redeye is possessed by the Demon. Its 797-horsepower supercharged HEMI® high-output engine makes it the most powerful, quickest and fastest muscle car reaching 0-60 miles per hour (mph) in 3.4 seconds and the fastest GT production car with a ¼-mile elapsed time (ET) of 10.8 seconds at 131 mph. It also reaches a new top speed of 203 mph. Joining the Challenger SRT Hellcat Redeye is the 2019 Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat with its more powerful 717-horsepower engine, the Challenger R/T Scat Pack Widebody, which features fender flares from the SRT Hellcat Widebody and adds 3.5 inches of width to Scat Pack's footprint, as well as and the new Challenger R/T Scat Pack 1320. Infused with exclusive drag strip technology from the iconic Dodge Challenger SRT Demon, the Challenger R/T Scat Pack 1320 is a drag-oriented, street-legal muscle car and a blank canvas for the serious grassroots drag racer. The 2019 Dodge Durango SRT, America's fastest, most powerful and most capable three-row SUV with a best-in-class tow rating of 8,700 lbs. fills out the brands' performance lineup. These visceral performance models join a 2019 brand lineup that includes the Durango, Grand Caravan, Journey, Charger and Challenger — a showroom that offers

performance at every price point.

## **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.

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