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Johnson Drives Dodge//SRT and Mopar to No. 3 Position in Funny Car Qualifying at NHRA Gatornationals

- Tommy Johnson, Jr. qualifies Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car third at Gainesville (Florida) Raceway
- Six Mopar-powered Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat drivers make Funny Car field at NHRA Gatornationals
- Mopar-powered Top Fuel driver Leah Pritchett to start from No. 4 spot
- Pritchett puts Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak in top half of Factory Stock Showdown field, comes up short in opening round
- Dodge Garage (http://www.dodgegarage.com/),a digital content hub for muscle car and race enthusiasts, features highlights from NHRA competition

March 16, 2019, Gainesville, Florida - Tommy Johnson, Jr. is the fastest of six Mopar-powered Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car drivers qualified for Sunday's elimination rounds at the 50th Annual NHRA Gatornationals at Gainesville (Florida) Raceway.

Johnson, who made his first professional run at Gainesville in 1984, earned the provisional No. 1 qualifying position Saturday afternoon with his lap of 3.896 seconds at 324.75 mph in the Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) Make-A-Wish machine, earning three bonus points. In the final qualifying session, Johnson was hoping to back up his earlier run and regain the No. 1 position, but an explosion halfway through his run resulted in the body flying off and the racecar slowing to a run of 4.385/182.92.

Johnson walked away from the scene and his DSR team will go to work to rebuild his Funny Car in order to chase history Sunday from the third starting spot. He'll be joined in Sunday's field by fellow DSR and Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car drivers Matt Hagan, Jack Beckman and Ron Capps as well as fellow Mopar-powered competitors Cruz Pedregon and Jim Campbell.

Hagan, winner of the NHRA Arizona Nationals three weeks ago, posted his best lap of 3.900/325.85 aboard the Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car in his final pass to grab the fifth position. Beckman, the defending Gatornationals champion, registered the same ET (3.900) driving the Infinite Hero Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat in Q4, but his speed of 323.74 dropped him to sixth. Pedregon also used Q4 to make his best run of the weekend (3.910/325.30) in the Snap-On Tools Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat to grab seventh just ahead of Capps in the NAPA Auto Parts Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat, who closed qualifying with a run of 3.933/318.77.

In Top Fuel, Leah Pritchett made an impressive pass to open both qualifying days aboard her Mopar Dodge Top Fuel dragster earning a pair of qualifying points with her Q1 run of 3.818 seconds at 321.88 mph and two more following her run of 3.724/325.22 in Saturday's Q3 session. Pritchett begins her fifth run for a Gatornationals Wally from the fourth position Sunday facing Pat Dakin in the opening round.

Dodge//SRT Mopar NHRA Sportsman Spotlight

Pritchett opened defense of her 2018 Factory Stock Showdown championship at Gainesville Raceway by qualifying her Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak sixth with a best run of 7.852/173.87 coming in the final session on Saturday afternoon, following a pair of runs Friday with results of 8.007/171.55 in Q1 and 8.018/172.10 in Q2.

In the opening round of eliminations, she lined up her 354-cubic-inch HEMI®-engine-powered Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak against Kevin Skinner. Pritchett left first with a .024 reaction time and posted a lap of 7.891/172.59, but couldn't hold off the Mustang driver's winning pass of 7.799/172.59.

Pro Stock World Champion and longtime Mopar Dodge driver Allen Johnson and former Pro Stock racer Mark Pawuk will look to rebound at the next Factory Stock event after failing to qualify for the 16-car ladder. Johnson's best run was a 8.069/169.69 that placed him on the outside of the competitive Factory Stock field, while Pawuk was also unable to crack the top 16 with his pass of 8.077/170.26.

Pritchett and her fellow Dodge//SRT Mopar drivers in the NHRA Factory Stock Showdown series will resume action in late April at the NHRA Four-Wide Nationals at zMAX Dragway near Charlotte, the second of eight 2019 FSS events.

Mopar Dodge//SRT Notes & Quotes
(best elapsed time in bold)

Leah Pritchett, Mopar Dodge Top Fuel Dragster
Qualified No. 4, will face No. 13 Pat Dakin
Friday: (3.818 seconds at 321.88 mph – Q1); (6.919/100.84 – Q2)
Saturday: (**3.724**/325.22 – Q3); (6.434/105.36 – Q4)

"We like to be in the position we're in where we're capable of pushing. That's where you learn, where you grow. No. 4 is a good qualifying spot. Both lanes are great. They're nice and smooth. I feel good about our chances tomorrow, especially if we get back to where we can throw down those really big numbers. That's what we get excited about. We learned a lot in Q4 even though the numbers didn't show it and I think that's going to set us up for a lot of momentum come race day. Conditions look like they'll be favorable. We're here to break records, break hearts and be a part of history. No better time than the 50th anniversary to bring some gold home."

Tommy Johnson Jr., Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car
Qualified No. 3, will face No. 14 John Smith.
Friday: (5.002 seconds at 152.24.35 mph – Q1); (3.985/322.85 – Q2)
Saturday: (**3.896**/324.75 – Q3); (8.695/80.93 – Q4)

"That (Q4 explosion) was probably the biggest boomer I've ever had. There was no warning whatsoever. The car was running really good and just before the finish line, kaboom! Unexpected for sure. I hate it for the crew guys, all the extra work it's going to cause. They went through that enough already in Phoenix. I don't think any of (these explosions) are related, and that's what's unfortunate. I don't think it's a problem we have, it's just maybe a run of bad luck. We'll get it fixed, the car is running really well. We'll come out here tomorrow, see if we can't lay down some good runs and keep the body on it."

Matt Hagan, Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car
Qualified No. 5, will face No. 12 Jonnie Lindberg
Friday: (4.779 seconds at 167.68 mph – Q1); (4.007/317.05 – Q2)
Saturday: (3.946/325.37– Q3); (**3.900**/325.85– Q4)

"Man, we've got a good hot rod. (Crew chief) Dickie Venables is continuing to get more and more comfortable with this race car and the combination we have right now. I'm excited about tomorrow. I've never won the Gatornationals. I finished as the runner-up last year and have a great opportunity and a great race car to get it done tomorrow. We won for Sandvik in Phoenix, now we need to win for Mopar."

Jack Beckman, Infinite Hero Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car
Qualified No. 6, will face No. 11 J.R. Todd
Friday: (5.075 seconds at 147.46 mph – Q1); (7.996/89.17– Q2)
Saturday: (14.702/44.17 – Q3); (**3.900**/323.74 – Q4)

"I picked up 180 miles an hour for the first time here at Gainesville in that final run and it felt good. We struggled. I screwed up the first run. We were too aggressive on one run. We were too soft on one run. We are the defending event champions. You don't want to go in with a whimper. We went in with some authority."

Ron Capps, NAPA Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car
Qualified No. 8, will face No. 9 Bob Tasca III

Friday: (4.017 seconds at 313.00 mph – Q1); (3.965/89.83 – Q2)
Saturday: (7.082/84.76– Q3); (**3.933**/318.77 – Q4)

“We used Q3 for a little test and those are the conditions you want to do it in. We sacrificed making a run, but we learned a bunch. I’m so proud of this NAPA team. This is sacred territory here with it being the 50th[WU2] Annual Gatornationals and it’d be pretty cool to get another trophy.”

Tune-in Info
FOX Sports 1 will broadcast three and a half of eliminations coverage of the 50th Annual NHRA Gatornationals starting at 7:30 p.m. ET on Sunday, March 17.

About Dodge
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.

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

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