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Leah Pritchett Powers to Top Fuel Semifinal Run in St. Louis at NHRA Midwest Nationals

- Leah Pritchett races Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) HEMI®-powered Top Fuel Dragster to fourth semifinal appearance of 2019 in AAA Insurance Midwest Nationals at World Wide Technology Raceway outside of St. Louis
- Matt Hagan qualifies DSR Precision Machining Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Widebody No. 2 before being upset in first round
- Pritchett pulls double duty qualifying DSR Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak seventh in Factory Stock Showdown, advances to second round
- Jacob Pitt and James Caro earn Dodge Top Finisher honors in Sportsman classes
- [Dodge Garage](#), a digital content hub for muscle car and race enthusiasts, features highlights from NHRA season
- New @DodgeMoparMotorsports Instagram channel features Dodge//SRT Mopar drivers in NHRA action

September 29, 2019, Auburn Hills, Mich. - Leah Pritchett led the Dodge//SRT Mopar contingent of drivers in the eighth annual AAA Insurance NHRA Midwest Nationals, powering the Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) Okuma Dodge Top Fuel Dragster to the semifinals at World Wide Technology Raceway near St. Louis. By doing so, Pritchett jumped up three positions in the NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series Countdown to the Championship standings.

Two-time Funny Car world champion Matt Hagan led five other drivers of Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Cars into Sunday's action by qualifying No. 2, with Ron Capps advancing the deepest of the six by racing into the quarterfinals.

Pritchett qualified the DSR Okuma Dodge Top Fuel Dragster sixth and found herself opposite three-time world champion and DSR teammate Antron Brown to open eliminations Sunday. Brown left first but was immediately in tire smoke while Pritchett made a clean run of 3.764 seconds, advancing to the second round for a matchup with Top Fuel rookie Austin Prock. Pritchett was looking to avenge a quarterfinal loss to Prock two weeks ago in the Countdown opener in Reading, Pennsylvania. Pritchett was smooth and cruised to victory with her pass of 3.835 seconds to reach her second consecutive St. Louis semifinal. She was looking to reach her second final in four events and had the starting-line advantage on Billy Torrence before her machine overpowered the track and started losing cylinders, ultimately allowing Torrence to secure the win.

Capps, who earned his first NHRA Funny Car victory in St. Louis in 1997, qualified fifth and drew No. 12 qualifier Blake Alexander in round one. The two were side-by-side until just before the finish line when Capps pulled ahead to take the win with his 3.966-second pass versus Alexander's 3.997-second effort. The victory marked Capps' 30th round win of the season and set up a quarterfinal battle with fellow Countdown contender and former world champion Robert Hight. In the quarterfinals, the pair of veteran drivers were nearly even until just before half-track when Capps hazed the tires and Hight was able to drive away with the win.

After making three strong runs Friday and Saturday to earn the No. 2 qualifying position driving the DSM Precision Machining Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Widebody Funny Car, two-time world champion Funny Car driver Matt Hagan was poised to make a deep run through eliminations Sunday. First up was a run versus Jim Campbell and his Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car. Campbell grabbed an early starting-line advantage but Hagan powered by and was looking good until his machine lost traction nearing the 330-foot mark. Hagan pedaled it and was able to regain traction but Campbell drove around Hagan and held him off with a run of 4.197 seconds at 249.39 mph to top Hagan's pass of 4.204 seconds at 265.06 mph. The first-round defeat drops Hagan from sixth to ninth in the

championship standings heading to Charlotte in two weeks.

“Fast Jack” Beckman opened the Countdown two weeks ago with a thrilling triumph in the Mopar Express Lane NHRA Nationals and he was looking to maintain his position on top of the standings after this weekend in St. Louis. The 2012 Funny Car champion was only able to make two cleans runs in qualifying, which resulted in the two-time St. Louis winner landing the Infinite Hero Foundation Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car in the ninth position. Beckman faced reigning Funny Car champion J.R. Todd in the first round, where he was looking to extend his streak to five straight wins in the opening round of eliminations over Todd. Todd left the starting line first but Beckman drove around him. Todd pulled back even at the 660-foot mark before edging Beckman by 0.0024 seconds (about 14 inches). Beckman now ranks third in the championship standings with four races remaining in the Countdown.

Tommy Johnson Jr. has been solid through the 2019 campaign powering the Make-A-Wish Foundation Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car to a pair of wins and two runner-up finishes. He qualified seventh and paired up against Shawn Langdon in the first round. Johnson made an impressive run of 3.898 seconds, the quickest elapsed time of the session, but Langdon’s quicker reaction time resulted in a holeshot loss for Johnson and his third straight first-round exit.

Pritchett was pulling double duty as the defending winner of this event in Factory Stock Showdown. She qualified the DSR Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak to the seventh position in the 16-car field. Pritchett defeated Ryan Priddy in round one to advance to the quarterfinals where she lost on a holeshot to Arthur Kohn.

Also in Factory Stock Showdown, Mark Pawuk qualified the DSR Empaco Equipment Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak second, beat Scott Libersher in the first round before losing traction in his race with Jesse Alexandra.

Mopar Dodge//SRT NHRA Sportsman Spotlight

Jacob Pitt and James Caro were winners of the Dodge Top Finisher honors in Stock Eliminator and Super Stock, respectively, and both will receive \$500 awards.

Pitt drove his C/SA 1969 Plymouth Barracuda to a fifth-round finish in Stock Eliminator. The Fort Worth, Texas, racer used his Mopar 440-cubic-inch Super Commando V-8 to turn on four win lights in eliminations.

The Dodge Top Finisher award, now in its third year, awards \$500 to Stock Eliminator and Super Stock drivers who advance the furthest behind the wheel of a Mopar-powered Dodge, Chrysler or Plymouth race car at all 24 NHRA national events.

Dodge Garage: Digital Hub for Drag Racing News

Fans can follow NHRA Dodge HEMI Challenge and NHRA U.S. Nationals coverage at Dodge Garage, the one-stop portal for Dodge//SRT and Mopar drag racing news. The site includes daily updates and access to an online racing HQ, news, events, galleries, available downloads and merchandise.

@DodgeMoparMotorsports on Instagram

The @DodgeMoparMotorsports Instagram channel will share content capturing Dodge//SRT Mopar drivers in action in the NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series, NHRA Sportsman grassroots racers competing in classes such as Factory Stock Showdown, Stock and Super Stock, as well as additional motorsports series.

AAA Insurance NHRA Midwest Nationals: Elimination Rounds Summary/Notes & Quotes

Leah Pritchett, Okuma Dodge//SRT Top Fuel Dragster

(No. 6 Qualifier – 3.709)

Rd. 1: (.064-second reaction time, 3.764 seconds at 326.87 mph) beat No. 11 Antron Brown (.052/6.001/116.41)

Rd. 2: (.064/3.835/321.88) beat No. 3 Austin Prock (.050/3.925/309.06)

Rd. 3: (.069/5.290/132.79) lost to No. 2 Billy Torrence (.094/3.769/322.96)

“We definitely have a lot of momentum and that’s what we’re focusing on right now. It felt good to get two win lights. We picked up a couple of spots in the points and that’s what we’re focused on. We have a good hot rod and we keep opening up our possibilities just like Okuma stands for. Immediately after our semifinal loss, the amount of in-depth research to figure out how and why we had a malfunction that caused that loss was immense. We’re pushing

really hard and that's what the Countdown takes. We'll regroup and focus on getting our hot rod back in the winner's circle."

Ron Capps, NAPA Filters Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car

(No. 5 Qualifier – 3.877)

Rd. 1: (.089-second reaction time, 3.966 seconds at 328.86 mph) beat No. 12 Blake Alexander (.077/3.997/319.29)

Rd. 2: (.078/4.272/225.52) lost No. 4 Robert Hight (.058/3.988/323.27)

"The interesting thing about this race was how many big-time Countdown match-ups there were early in the day. It's going to be like that from here on out; this is playoff racing right now and everyone is on high alert. You can feel the energy in the staging lanes. It's everything you've worked at all year long. We went out and ran great against Blake Alexander in the first round and then faced Robert Hight and (crew chief) Jimmy Prock in round two. That's one of those 'down to the finals at the last race of the season' kind of match-ups. They're a team we always get up for. We were out in front of Robert but the car just pulled the tires loose at about 400 feet. We just didn't take enough power out of it. But we've got a heck of a hot rod so I'm excited about these next couple of races."

Matt Hagan, DSM Precision Machining Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Widebody Funny Car

(No. 2 Qualifier – 3.854)

Rd. 1: (.095-second reaction time, 4.204 seconds at 265.06 mph) lost to No. 15 Jim Campbell (.051/4.197/249.39)

"First round losses are always devastating. There are a lot of good cars out here in this class right now and we just have to get our stuff together. And do better. This team is better than that and we are better than we showed here today in St. Louis. We showed how good we were in qualifying, grabbing that No. 2 spot and went down the race track every run Friday and Saturday. What happened today was unexpected. I was glad it recovered and we pedaled it to the finish but it just wasn't enough. It's unfortunate. I apologize to our sponsors. I apologize to our fans. That's just not the results we are accustomed to putting up. It's crunch time. We have to do better. It's just that simple."

Tommy Johnson Jr., Make-A-Wish Foundation Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car

(No. 7 Qualifier – 3.889)

Rd. 1: (.113-second reaction time, 3.898 seconds at 324.44 mph) lost to No. 10 Shawn Langdon (.047/3.907/330.72)

"These first two races of the Countdown have not gone the way we had hoped. The car had been off a little bit and then we got the car back and then I'm off, so we've all got to get on the same page and get the job done. It's just frustrating, you never want to lose that way but we have a strong race car again, so we'll go back and see if we can't finish out the year strong."

Jack Beckman, Infinite Hero Foundation Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car

(No. 9 Qualifier – 3.894)

Rd. 1: (.096-second reaction time, 3.944 seconds at 326.56 mph) lost No. 8 J.R. Todd (.084/3.954/327.27)

"We missed the beat here this weekend. We made it down the track two of four qualifying sessions and our car the last two races has been absolutely stellar. I don't think by any means we were lost. I was very confident heading into race day. The bottom line is this one goes down as a holed-out loss and that was on me. Had my right foot been three-thousandths of a second quicker we wouldn't be talking about this and heading into the next round and racking up points. I feel like I let the team down. I just needed to have a faster light. If you lose by a bunch you shrug your shoulders and look at data and go on. When you lose by two-thousandths of a second you second guess yourself a whole bunch. I think we've got to move past that and unload in Charlotte and get ready to win that one."

Up Next: NHRA Carolina Nationals

The action continues in two weeks with the 12th annual NHRA Carolina Nationals at zMAX Dragway in Concord, North Carolina. Capps is the defending event winner while Hagan and Beckman have also scored previous Countdown wins in Charlotte. Johnson will look to join them in race three of the six-race NHRA Countdown for the Championship scheduled for October 11-13.

2019 NHRA Championship Point Standings: Through 20 of 24 Rounds

(Season Wins in Parentheses)

NHRA Funny Car

1. Robert Hight (5) – 2,235
2. John Force (2) – 2,222
- 3. Jack Beckman, Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat (1) – 2,211**
- 4. Ron Capps, Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat (3) – 2,191**
5. J.R. Todd (1) – 2,182
6. Bob Tasca III (2) – 2,156
7. Shawn Langdon (2) – 2,155
- 8. Tommy Johnson, Jr. Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat (2) – 2,138**
- 9. Matt Hagan, Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Widebody (2) – 2,132**
10. Tim Wilkerson – 2,109

NHRA Top Fuel

1. Doug Kalitta (2) – 2,232
2. Steve Torrence (8) – 2,230
3. Mike Salinas (2) – 2,191
4. Brittany Force (1) – 2,184
- 5. Leah Pritchett, Mopar HEMI (1) – 2,170**
- 6t. Antron Brown – 2,159
- 6t. Richie Crampton (2) – 2,159
8. Austin Prock (1) – 2,153
9. Billy Torrence (1) – 2,152
10. Clay Millican – 2,125

About Dodge//SRT

For more than 100 years, the Dodge brand has carried on the spirit of brothers John and Horace Dodge. Their influence continues today as Dodge proudly offers a complete lineup of performance vehicles that stand out in their own segments. For 2020, Dodge literally expands its high-performance Charger model lineup, adding a Widebody exterior to America's only four-door muscle car. The 2020 Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat maintains its reign as the most powerful and fastest mass-produced sedan in the world.

The 2020 Dodge lineup also features the 2020 Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat Redeye, 2020 Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat, the Challenger R/T Scat Pack Widebody and the 2020 Challenger R/T Scat Pack 1320. The 2020 Dodge Durango SRT, the fastest, most powerful and most capable American three-row SUV, completes the brand's performance lineup. These visceral performance models join a 2020 brand lineup that includes the Durango, Grand Caravan, Journey, Charger and Challenger. Dodge is part of the portfolio of brands offered by global automaker Fiat Chrysler Automobiles. For more information regarding FCA (NYSE: FCAU/ MTA: FCA), please visit www.fcagroup.com.

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Mopar (a simple contraction of the words MOrtor 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.

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