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Dan Reid

Mopar Dodge//SRT Up to Speed Quickly with No.1 Qualifier Tommy Johnson Jr. in NHRA Racing Restart

- Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) driver Tommy Johnson Jr. earns top spot in Funny Car qualifying aboard MD Anderson Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat for Sunday's E3 Spark Plugs NHRA Nationals
- Funny Car points leader Jack Beckman qualifies third aboard his HEMI®-powered machine for the first NHRA event after four-month hiatus
- Matt Hagan posts sixth quickest time to earn spot in top half of qualifying ladder aboard his Mopar Dodge//SRT Funny Car
- DSR driver Leah Pruett's Mopar Dodge//SRT Top Fuel Dragster qualifies 10th on Sunday's eliminations ladder next to DSR teammate Tony Schumacher who makes his return to competition since November 2018

July 11, 2020, Brownsburg, Ind. - Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) driver Tommy Johnson Jr. wasted no time getting his MD Anderson Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat back up to speed at Lucas Oil Raceway by qualifying in the top spot for Sunday's elimination rounds of the E3 Spark Plugs NHRA Nationals after a four-month pause in the 2020 National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Mello Yello Drag Racing Series season due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Picking up from where he left off as Funny Car title winner at the Arizona Nationals in February, Johnson set the quickest elapsed time on his first qualifying run with a 3.983-second run at 317.72 mph to kick off the two-day race event; the first of a pair of back-to-back race weekends at the Indianapolis drag strip to restart the 2020 NHRA season and the first major-league auto racing event in the state of Indiana to allow fans back in the stands.

"It's just a great start after such a long layoff and all the uncertainty," said Johnson of his first No. 1 qualifier position of the season and the 19th of his career. "It's going to be a tough day tomorrow because the conditions are going to be so much different. Today was really irrelevant for tomorrow, but it's good to know that we have a good baseline and can go from there."

Johnson will have Ron Capps as a first round opponent in the next lane after his DSR teammate qualified 16th for the first time since 2009 (Chicago) based on his first run of 4.555 seconds at 184.70 mph and a problem on the start line that never saw him take a second pass.

Funny Car points leader Jack Beckman drove his Infinite Hero Foundation Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat to the third spot on the eliminations ladder with his second run of the day by posting a 4.050 second /298.47 mph effort.

"Now that we've lost the first two qualifying runs (due to shortened race event), and the fact that 18 cars showed up, we knew qualifying was going to be a nail biter; we just didn't think it would be for us," said Beckman after first run issues sent the team back to the pits looking to work out the gremlins and improve the car for a final shot at improving their ladder position. "I always think we have a car good enough to win the race. Qualifying third kind of underscores that for me."

Matt Hagan also saw improvements made to his Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car between qualifying runs to help him post the sixth quickest run of the day.

"All in all, it was a great qualifying day," said Hagan, who will face off against Daniel Wilkerson in the first round and is looking forward to racing in front of fans again. "Really glad to be a part of NHRA and I want to thank the sanctioning body for bringing the fans back out. We're one of the first motorsports series to do that."

“Our Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat is running well and it’ll be fun to get back into competition mode tomorrow,” added Hagan, who is looking to move up from his fifth place position in the points battle. “Our car is running strong, we had two good laps today. It was hot today which it makes it a little trickier to be able to navigate the car, but the conditions will be different tomorrow. I’m excited. It’s going to be an early morning tomorrow. We warm up at 6:45 a.m., so I’m going to eat a good steak dinner tonight, get some rest and get ready to do this tomorrow.”

In Top Fuel competition, Leah Pruett and her DSR Mopar Dodge//SRT Dragster will be joined by two additional DSR entries for the doubleheader race events in Indianapolis. Veteran racer Tony Schumacher, the winningest Top Fuel driver in NHRA history, returns to competition for the first time since November 2018, while Cory McClenathan, who retired in 2019, had five of his 34 career wins while racing for DSR from 2008-2010.

Pruett qualified 10th with a quick time of 3.934 seconds at 306.33 mph to find herself paired up for a first round match-up against her seventh-seeded teammate, Schumacher.

“We have Tony Schumacher with a long list of success here at Indy but this is not the U.S. Nationals,” said Pruett who sits second in the Top Fuel championship point standings. “This is the Indy Nationals and this Mopar team is definitely ready to fight this fight and looking forward to competition tomorrow. We have a long night ahead of us as we triple check everything and be on my practice game and race face for tomorrow even under the mask.”

McClenathan qualified 12th and will meet T.J. Zizzo as his first round opponent.

Elimination rounds at the E3 Spark Plugs NHRA Nationals begin at 9 a.m. on Sunday, July 12, while television coverage includes live action on the FOX national broadcast network beginning at 12 p.m. Eastern.

NHRA Championship Points Standings (After two of 18 National events):

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. **Jack Beckman (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 258 (1)**
2. **Tommy Johnson Jr. (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 216(1)**
3. John Force – 173
4. **Ron Capps (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 159**
5. **Matt Hagan (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 158**
6. Tim Wilkerson – 139
7. Alexis DeJoria – 134
8. J.R. Todd – 101
9. Robert Hight – 100
10. Cruz Pedregon – 96

TOP FUEL (season wins in parentheses)

1. Doug Kalitta – 250 (1)
2. **Leah Pruett (Mopar Dodge//SRT) – 169**
3. Steve Torrance – 159 (1)
4. Brittany Force – 153
5. Justin Ashley – 140
6. Antron Brown – 134
7. Austin Prock – 131
8. Shawn Langdon – 124
9. Clay Millican – 122
10. Billy Torrence – 110

DodgeGarage: Digital Hub for Drag Racing News

Fans can follow all the NHRA’s action this season at DodgeGarage, 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. For more information, visit www.dodgegarage.com.

@DodgeMoparMotorsports on Instagram

The [@DodgeMoparMotorsports](#) Instagram channel continues to share content capturing Dodge//SRT Mopar drivers on the track. Fans can see action from the NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series and NHRA Sportsman grassroots racers competing in classes such as Factory Stock Showdown, Stock and Super Stock, as well as additional motorsports series.

Official Driving School of Dodge//SRT

Dodge is the official sponsor of the Bondurant School of High Performance Driving in Chandler, Arizona, where guests get behind the wheels of the fastest street-legal cars in the world with professional instruction and time on the track. Customers who buy a new SRT model receive one full-day session as part of the Dodge//SRT Package and have the opportunity to learn how to get the optimum performance from their new vehicles in a controlled environment. For more information, visit dodgegarage.com/track-experience.

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 more than 150 markets. 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.

Complete information on the Mopar brand is available at www.mopar.com. Mopar 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.

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 shifts into high gear with muscle cars and SUVs that deliver unrivaled performance in each of the segments where they compete.

2021 marks the year that Dodge is distilled into a pure performance brand, offering Hellcat-powered, 700+ horsepower SRT versions of every model across the lineup. For the 2021 model year, Dodge delivers the drag-strip dominating 807-horsepower Dodge Challenger SRT Super Stock, the new 797-horsepower Dodge Charger SRT Redeye, the most powerful and fastest mass-produced sedan in the world, and the new 710-horsepower Dodge Durango SRT Hellcat, the most powerful SUV ever. Combined, these three muscle cars make Dodge the industry's most powerful brand, offering more horsepower than any other American brand across its entire lineup.

In June 2020, Dodge was named the "#1 Brand in Initial Quality," making it the first domestic brand ever to rank No. 1 in the J.D. Power Initial Quality Study (IQS). 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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