

Contact: Pat Caporali

Dan Reid

## **Johnson Jr. Drives to Victory and Record 11th Consecutive Win for DSR Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat at Mopar Express Lane NHRA Midwest Nationals Presented by Pennzoil**

- Wild day of racing at Mopar Express Lane NHRA Midwest Nationals Presented by Pennzoil ends with all-Dodge Funny Car final and a record 11th consecutive national event win for Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) at World Wide Technology Raceway near St. Louis
- Tommy Johnson Jr. drives DSR MD Anderson Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat to second win of season and contributes to tightening up of the DSR Top-3 battle for Funny Car championship
- Matt Hagan's runner-up finish puts the Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat in the lead for the Funny Car world championship with three national events left in NHRA season
- DSR's Leah Pruett walks away unhurt from wild ride in Top Fuel quarterfinals
- Factory Stock Showdown eliminations postponed to Monday for No.1 qualifier Mark Pawuk and fellow Mopar Drag Pak pilot Pruett due to unusually cold and windy track conditions

October 4, 2020, St. Louis, Mo. - It was wild action-packed day of racing at the Mopar Express Lane Midwest Nationals Presented by Pennzoil at World Wide Technology Raceway near St. Louis that concluded with an all-Mopar Funny Car final round showdown, a record 11th consecutive national event victory for the Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) team, and a shuffling atop the leaderboard for the final stretch in the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Funny Car world championship.

Tommy Johnson Jr. earned his second Wally trophy of the 2020 season by defeating DSR teammates Jack Beckman in the semifinals and then Matt Hagan in the final, both of whom he is battling in a tight Funny Car championship fight with just three national events remaining. Johnson did it decisively by posting the quickest run of the weekend in the final, a 3.884-second, 326 mph effort aboard his MD Anderson Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat, to edge out Hagan's 3.886-second pass at 330 mph.

"The last couple races have been "must do well" races and you look over there (at DSR teammates Beckman and Hagan) and they're still going rounds, so when you do face-up against them, it's a must-win," said Johnson. "You can't let them keep going rounds or you fall a round behind. It was huge to be able to take out both of them today and keep ourselves securely planted in it and make it a solid three three-man race right now".

While Johnson remains third in the standings, the win keeps him in contention with just 34 points separating the three teammates atop the leaderboard. His win also extends the DSR's unprecedented streak of victories to a record 11 national events since October 2019.

"It's incredible that we won that many races in a row as a team and that I won the race today," added Johnson. "It's a tribute to all the hard work, even through the lockdowns and everything. These guys are at the shop working and trying to make everything better even not knowing when we would race again. They continually worked hard to keep that advantage. It's extremely hard to make these cars run that good, that long, and that many runs in a row, so to be able to do it for this long is incredible."

The runner-up finish by Hagan moves the Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat driver into the championship lead ahead of Beckman and Johnson. He advanced to his 63rd career final elimination with round wins against Bob Bode, teammate Ron Capps and Alexis DeJoria.

"As tough as it is to lose a close final like that, we gained ground and took the points lead, Said Hagan. "We had a

good weekend and it's hard to complain when you make a final round. That was the bad side of a really good drag race for our Mopar team. It's a Mopar-sponsored event and we wanted to win for Mopar and Express Lane, but at least another DSR Dodge Hellcat won again with Tommy (Johnson). I just can't say enough about my guy working so hard with no mistakes. (Crew Chief) Dickie Venables is really tuning a mean race car. We've had such a fast car all season long. We're making ground and that's what matters. We're used to this thing being tight and most of these championships are won on the final day of the season by one or two points. I'm extremely proud of my guys. It was a good day and weekend at St. Louis."

Capps saw his race day end prematurely along with any hopes of remaining close to the fight atop the standings as a result of a second fiery run in two events; this one resulting in "oil-down" that cost him 10 valuable points and a quarterfinals loss to Hagan.

Race day at the Mopar Express Lane Midwest Nationals was also marked by a frightening Round 2 incident for Leah Pruett and her Mopar Top Fuel dragster. After qualifying ninth, she started her day with a solid first round pass at 3.676 sec./ 328.38 mph over eighth seeded opponent Pat Dakin (0.057/11.817/70.73), but hopes of adding a few more round wins were cut short on her next run. Halfway through her drag race against DSR teammate Tony Schumacher, Pruett went for a wild ride as her dragster broke in two and went airborne before landing back on track and coming to a stop. The Mopar driver exited her vehicle unaided and walked away unhurt but disappointed.

"This was the most intense round of competition I've ever had and the wildest ride I've ever had, that's for sure," said Pruett who, despite the setback, remains third in the standings behind points leader Steve Torrence and Doug Kalitta. "We're still taking time to process and look at the parts and put a plan together for how to move forward. For me, my body is fine. My mind is fine. The DSR chassis and Impact safety equipment did everything it was supposed to. As a drag racer this is what we do. There's a risk. I think the quicker you can get back on the track, the better. Let's not ever do that again. I thank the lord, my team, the chassis shop, Don (Schumacher), and everybody that helped. Not a great start to October and that was an early Halloween surprise. That's for sure."

The brisk temperatures and windy conditions made it more difficult for low downforce vehicles to compete safely on the dragstrip and as such, the NHRA made the difficult decision to postpone racing for all other classes and categories including Factory Stock Showdown. No. 1 qualifier Mark Pawuk and fellow Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak driver Pruett, who qualified seventh, will await an NHRA announcement regarding a later date for the FSS eliminations to be run at another upcoming event.

The Mopar Dodge SRT contingent will head west in two weeks for the 35th annual AAA Texas NHRA Fall Nationals on Oct. 14–18 at Texas Motorsplex near Dallas. NHRA qualifying highlights will be broadcast on FS1 on Saturday, Oct. 17, at 7:30–8:30 p.m. ET, and Sunday, Oct. 18 from 1–2 p.m. ET. Television coverage of the elimination rounds, including Live finals from the Fall Nationals, will air on Sunday, Oct. 18, on FS1 from 2–5 p.m. ET.

#### **ADDITIONAL NOTES and QUOTES:**

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

###### **(No. 5 Qualifier – 4.750 seconds at 185.03 mph)**

Round 1: (0.084-second reaction time, 3.885 seconds at 332.10 mph) defeated No.12 Blake Alexander (0.150/6.630/95.37)

Round 2: (0.089/3.890/329.50) defeated No. 4 Dan Wilkerson (0.092/3.976/314.97)

Round 3: (0.083/3.903/330.80) (0.068/3.896/327.98) loss to No. Tommy Johnson Jr.

"It's not the way I thought the day would end. I really thought we had the car to beat. Guido (Dean Antonelli) and (John) Medlen tuned perfect for today's conditions. We were low ET, low ET and in the semis second low ET. The problem was the car we pulled up next too, Tommy Johnson, was low ET. The silver lining is a DSR Dodge Funny Car wins for the 11th straight race for Don (Schumacher). The upside for us is that we have three more chances to get trophies and the way our car is performing I wouldn't put it past us."

##### **Matt Hagan, Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car**

###### **(No.6 Qualifier – 5.105 seconds at 148.15 mph)**

Round 1: ( 0.094-second reaction time, 3.959 seconds at 319.98 mph) defeated No. Bob Bode (0.031/4.080/266.21)

Round 2: (0.080/4.085/249.58) defeated No. 14 Ron Capps (0.090/5.182/113.44)  
Round 3: (0.102/3.935/328.62) defeated No. 2 Alexis DeJoria (0.121/8.043/87.47)  
Round 4: (0.058/3.886/333.00) loss to No. 8 Tommy Johnson Jr. (0.047/3.884/326.08)

"As tough as it is to lose a close final like that, we gained ground and took the points lead. We had a good weekend and it's hard to complain when you make a final round. That was the bad side of a really good drag race for our Mopar team. It's a Mopar-sponsored event and we wanted to win for Mopar and Express Lane, but at least another DSR Dodge Hellcat won again with Tommy (Johnson). I just can't say enough about my guy working so hard with no mistakes. Dickie Venables is really tuning a mean race car. We've had such a fast car all season long. We're making ground and that's what matters. We're used to this thing being tight and most of these championships are won on the final day of the season by one or two points. I'm extremely proud of my guys. It was a good day and weekend at St. Louis."

#### **Tommy Johnson Jr., MD Anderson Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car**

**(No. 8 Qualifier – 7.220 seconds at 118.97 mph)**

Round 1: (0.084-second reaction time, 3.919 seconds at 324.05 mph) defeated No. 9 Terry Haddock (0.115/4.174/283.31)  
Round 2: (0.078/3.943/324.51) defeated No. 1 Paul Lee (0.184 /3.892/330.72)  
Round 3: (0.068/3.896/327.98) defeated No. 5 Jack Beckman (0.083/3.903/330.80)  
Round 4: (0.047/3.884/326.08) defeated No. 6 Matt Hagan (0.058/3.886/333.00)

"What a different set of circumstances from last weekend at Gainesville where it was hot humid, to come to St. Louis where it's cold and the track is tight. My guys did a great job of adapting. It's really hard to make your cars run well in these conditions. The cars want to run good, but it's hard to get them down the track. The team did a great job of adjusting and made the right changes and it kept getting better and better with each run. Racing teammates (Jack) Beckman and (Matt) Hagan in the final was some of the best drag races all weekend. It was close and it was tight and if you want to win this championship you have to step up to the plate. Today this MD Anderson Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat stepped up to that plate. It was just an outstanding car and the fans got a show at the Mopar Express Lane Midwest Nationals presented by Pennzoil with the win."

#### **Ron Capps, NAPA Auto Parts Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car**

**(No. 14 Qualifier – 12.851 seconds at 71.93 mph)**

Round 1: (0.110-second reaction time, 3.894 seconds at 331.77 mph) defeated No. 3 Cruz Pedregon (0.046/14.145 /65.73)  
Round 2: (0.090/5.182/113.44) loss to No. 6 Matt Hagan (0.080/4.085/249.58)

"I'm not sure what to say at this point. The NAPA guys are tearing the car apart to see what went wrong. That's two pretty good ones in two races. We have to figure out what the issue is. We have a great running car. We had lane choice. It hurts worse when you see your opponent go out and run 4.08 when you have an issue like that. It's depressing when we have such a great car. The good thing is I know they'll dissect the problem and find out exactly what the issue was and we'll have it fixed for Dallas in two weeks."

#### **Leah Pruett, Mopar Top Fuel Dragster**

**(No. 9 Qualifier – 4.310 seconds at 249.07 mph)**

Round 1: (0.037-second reaction time, 3.676 seconds at 328.38 mph) defeated No. 8 Pat Dakin (0.057/11.817/70.73)  
Round 2: (0.060/No Time/ No Speed) loss to No. 1 Tony Schumacher (0.071/3.750/291.13)

"That was the most intense round of competition I've ever had and the wildest ride I've ever had, that's for sure. We're still taking time to process and look at the parts and put a plan together for how to move forward. For me, my body is fine. My mind is fine. The DSR chassis and Impact safety equipment did everything it was supposed to. As a drag racer this is what we do. There's a risk. I think the quicker you can get back on the track, the better. Let's not ever do that again. I thank the lord, my team, the chassis shop, Don (Schumacher), and everybody that helped. Not a great start to October and that was an early Halloween surprise. That's for sure."

#### **Mark Pawuk, Empaco Equipment Mopar Drag Pak– Factory Stock Shootout**

**(No. 1 Qualifier – 7.814 seconds at 175.48 mph)**

## **Leah Pruett, Mopar Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak – Factory Stock Shootout**

(No. 7 Qualifier – 7.955 seconds at 172.32 mph)

### **NHRA CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS STANDINGS:**

(Following the Mopar Express Lane Midwest Nationals)

#### **FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)**

- 1. Matt Hagan (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 659 (2)**
- 2. Jack Beckman (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 643 (2)**
- 3. Tommy Johnson Jr. (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 625 (2)**
- 4. Ron Capps (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 527 (2)**
5. Tim Wilkerson – 480
6. J.R. Todd – 473
7. Bob Tasca III – 465
8. Alexis DeJoria – 375
9. Paul Lee – 319
10. Cruz Pedregon – 303

#### **TOP FUEL (season wins in parentheses)**

1. Steve Torrance – 642 (3)
2. Doug Kalitta – 640 (2)
- 3. Leah Pruett (Mopar Dodge//SRT) – 562**
4. Billy Torrance – 506 (1)
5. Terry McMillen – 436
6. Justin Ashley – 433 (1)
7. Antron Brown – 425
8. Shawn Langdon – 415 (1)
9. Clay Millican – 347
10. Tony Schumacher – 234

#### **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](http://www.dodgegarage.com).

#### **@DodgeMoparMotorsports on Instagram**

The [@DodgeMoparMotorsports](https://www.instagram.com/dodge_mopar_motorsports/) 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](http://dodgegarage.com/track-experience).

#### **Mopar**

Mopar (a simple contraction of the words MObor 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.fcagroup.com).

### **Follow Dodge, SRT and FCA news and video on:**

Company blog: <http://blog.fcanorthamerica.com>

Media website: <http://media.fcanorthamerica.com>

Dodge brand: [www.dodge.com](http://www.dodge.com)

Dodge Garage: [www.dodgegarage.com](http://www.dodgegarage.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/dodge](https://www.facebook.com/dodge) or <https://www.facebook.com/FiatChrysler.NorthAmerica/>

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/dodgeofficial](https://www.instagram.com/dodgeofficial) or [www.instagram.com/FiatChrysler\\_NA](https://www.instagram.com/FiatChrysler_NA)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/dodge](https://www.twitter.com/dodge) or [www.twitter.com/FiatChrysler\\_NA](https://www.twitter.com/FiatChrysler_NA)

YouTube: [www.youtube.com/dodge](https://www.youtube.com/dodge) or [www.youtube.com/fcanorthamerica](https://www.youtube.com/fcanorthamerica)

-###-

Additional information and news from FCA are available at: <http://media.fcanorthamerica.com>