

HEMI® Engines are Revved Up for Mopar Mile High NHRA Nationals at Bandimere Speedway

- Mopar kick starts their signature NHRA event by firing up Don Schumacher Racing Dodge (DSR) Charger R/T Funny Car at Red Rocks
- HEMI® 50th anniversary tribute Funny Car will be driven by DSR driver Matt Hagan at Mopar Mile High Nationals at Bandimere Speedway
- Mopar legend Tom Hoover, regarded as the father of the HEMI, will serve as Grand Marshal at the Mopar Mile-High NHRA Nationals
- 13th edition of the popular Mopar Block Party to be held once again in downtown Golden
- Pro Stock Driver Johnson has five wins at Denver and aims for eighth straight final-round appearance at Thunder Mountain

July 17, 2014, Golden, Colo. - A full slate of activities for the Mopar Mile High National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Nationals was kicked off on Thursday morning at Red Rocks Park, a dramatic geological formation near Bandimere Speedway, by the firing-up of the Don Schumacher Racing Dodge (DSR) Charger R/T Funny Car driven by Matt Hagan in order to “wake-up Denver” and let fans know Mopar drivers and teams are in town and revving to get the weekend started.

The Mopar Express Lane Crew helmed by team owner Don Schumacher warmed up the Funny Car, which features a special 50th anniversary tribute to the legendary 426 Race HEMI® engine for this weekend’s national event, in front of fans in the early morning hours with the sounds of the 10,000 horsepower HEMI-powered Dodge Charger R/T echoing off the picturesque rocks surrounding the amphitheater plaza at Red Rocks. The 35th edition of Mopar’s signature event will be held at the Bandimere’s family quarter-mile Thunder Mountain drag strip at 5800 feet above sea level on July 18-20.

“We wanted to find a fun way to start the weekend off with some HEMI thunder of our own,” said Pietro Gorlier, President and CEO of Mopar, Chrysler Group LLC’s service, parts and customer-care brand, who was in attendance for the warm-up. “After celebrating 25 years of title sponsorship of this fantastic event in 2013, this year our focus is on commemorating the 50th anniversary of the iconic 426 Race HEMI. The legendary engine is still such a vital part of Mopar’s heritage and a key ingredient in the success we’ve had at Bandimere Speedway over these years. We’re very proud to be able to continue and add to that that legacy thanks to the hard work of our Mopar teams in Pro Stock and Funny Car classes.”

“We’re proud of the success the legendary HEMI engine continues to have on race tracks as that is what persistently reinforces the quality of the Mopar brand, not just making it synonymous with the sought after muscle car but also with quality service and parts,” Gorlier said. “We are especially proud to invite the father of the HEMI, Tom Hoover, to join us in that celebration as Grand Marshall of the Mopar Mile High Nationals.”

Widely regarded as the “Father of the 426 HEMI,” Tom Hoover spearheaded a performance revolution during his decades of service with Chrysler Corporation, playing an instrumental role in the creation of early racing programs, iconic engines and products that still fuel the Mopar and Dodge brands to this day.

In addition to his work on the 426 HEMI “elephant” engine — so nicknamed for its size, strength and power — Hoover also was instrumental in the development of early Funny Cars, small block engine NHRA Pro Stock cars and a long list of additional performance parts. Hoover was also a founding member of the Ramchargers race team, the legendary group of drag racers/Chrysler Corporation employees whose passion for quarter-mile competition helped launch the company’s motorsports program during the dawn of the performance era.

To complete the countdown to this weekend's national event will be the 13th edition of the popular Mopar Block Party festivities held on Thursday, July 17th, from 6 to 10 p.m. (MT) between 11th and 13th street in downtown Golden, Colo. where fans are invited to take part in a large variety of free activities.

They include an All-Mopar driver autograph session featuring five-time and defending title winner, Allen Johnson, five-time and reigning NHRA Pro Stock World Champion, Jeg Coughlin Jr., and runner-up the last two years at Bandimere Speedway, V. Gaines. Also joining the factory Mopar Hot Rod drivers will be 2011 Funny Car Champion Matt Hagan and 2012 Champ Jack Beckman, teammate Tommy Johnson Jr., as well as DSR Top Fuel drivers Tony Schumacher and Spencer Massey.

On display will be Mopar's NHRA race cars, classic cars and special display vehicles, as well as Mopar product demonstrations. The evening will be hosted by local radio personality Willie B. of KBPI 106.7 FM and highlights will also include a live concert with local Golden vendors offering food and drink for purchase. Also broadcasting live from the street party will be Kurt Hansen's "Race Central Radio on Yahoo Sports, ESPN Sports Radio And KFNX AM 100 Phoenix presented By Office Liquidators, Tuff Shed and Bandimere Speedway".

As Mopar teams prepare to hit the track at scenic Rocky Mountain drag strip there is plenty of anticipation for the event that serves as the opener of the NHRA western swing, which includes stops in Sonoma, California, and Seattle, Washington. Last year, the Roy Johnson tuned Pro Stock HEMI engines swept the western swing and are hoping to repeat the feat starting with a win at the Mopar Mile High Nationals

The odds favour Allen Johnson who has been the king of Thunder Mountain earning five wins (2013, 2012, 2010, 2009, 2007), four No. 1 Qualifier award, seven straight final round appearances and has posted nine out of the ten fastest passes at this track. He and Mopar teammate Jeg Coughlin Jr, along with HEMI-powered hometown favorite, V. Gaines, will be taking their new Dodge Dart hot rods down the track for the first time since their debut earlier this season.

In Funny Car, Hagan would like to take his HEMI 50th anniversary Mopar to the winners circle for this first time while Beckman would like to add a victory to the two titles earned in 2012 and 2007 and three final round appearances in the past seven years. Tommy Johnson Jr. has seen victory circle at Bandimere Speedway in other classes but will work to take his Funny Car Dodge Charger R/T there this weekend while Ron Capps, who stands third in the Funny Car points, would love to use a win in Denver to propel him further up the standings.

ESPN2 will provide coverage of the Mopar Mile High NHRA Nationals with two hours of qualifying highlights on Saturday, July 19 starting at 11 p.m. (ET). Three and a half hours of elimination round coverage will air on Sunday, July 20, starting at 2:30 p.m. (ET).

-###-

Additional information and news from Stellantis are available at: <https://media.stellantisnorthamerica.com>