

Contact: Tom Blattler  
Darren Jacobs

## **Mopar Ready for the 2015 NHRA Season Start at the Winternationals**

New 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Set for Competition Debut; Poised to Defend 2014 Funny Car Championship

- Mopar set to begin bid for more world championships during 2015 National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) drag racing season at Winternationals event this weekend
- New 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car ready to make competition debut at Auto Club Raceway
- 2014 NHRA Funny Car Champion Hagan looks forward to defending his world title and win at Pomona
- Johnson and his engine-tuner dad begin their 20th season of racing in NHRA Pro Stock class aboard Dodge Dart with new crew chief Hornberger
- Gaines back behind the wheel of a Dodge Dart for his tenth season aboard a HEMI®-powered Mopar
- Mopar continues commitment to amateur racing and honors Williams as 2014 winner of Tom Hoover Sportsman Challenge

February 6, 2015, Pomona, California - The 2015 National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Mello Yello Drag Racing series season is in the staging lanes at the historic Auto Club Raceway near Pomona, California, as Mopar, Fiat Chrysler Automobile's (FCA) service, parts and customer-care brand, not only looks to begin working on adding to the streak of five coveted NHRA world championship titles earned in Funny Car and Pro Stock categories over the last four years, but also is poised for the competition debut of the new 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T at this weekend's Winternationals event.

Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) driver Matt Hagan will look to defend his 2014 Funny Car world title this season aboard the new 2015 Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car unveiled this past November at the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) show. The defending champion feels confident for the season opener with his new-look Mopar, especially after recording the unofficial fastest pass in NHRA Funny Car history during an off-season test in Florida this winter, with a time of 3.954 seconds at an incredible 323.97 miles per hour (mph). Hagan also has two Wally trophies to show for his efforts at the Pomona track in three consecutive final-round battles against rival John Force.

"It's going to be another tough season, for sure," said Hagan who earned four of the seven victories posted by Mopar-powered Dodge entries in 2014, to bring his Funny Car career victory total to 14 in 30 final-round appearances. "We just have to make sure our car goes down the racetrack and we continue to do the things we've done that put us in the position we're in right now, with that No.1 on the side of our car."

Hagan's 2014 championship was the fifth in the last four years for the Mopar and Dodge brands following his 2011 Funny Car title, DSR teammate Jack Beckman's 2012 crown, and back-to-back NHRA Pro Stock championships by Allen Johnson (2012) and Jeg Coughlin Jr. (2013).

"Having the new 2015 Dodge Charger R/T body is just huge," Hagan added. "The guys at Mopar and SRT did a phenomenal job with this body and there are so many improvements to it and the visibility is much better for me as a driver. All in all, I think it's a great piece and I can't wait to race it this season. I'm ready to get going. We have a great car and we had a great couple of test sessions during the offseason. The last couple years at Pomona, our car has been great. We are rolling into Pomona with the combination we left there with so I'm feeling confident."

Returning to DSR's powerhouse quad for this season's hunt for third Funny Car championship in four years is Tommy Johnson Jr. who finished third overall in 2014 to put two Mopars in the top three of the final standings.

"We finished 2014 on a really high note, and we were making a late charge there at the end of the season," said Johnson who once again will have the Terry Chandler sponsored Make-A-Wish livery on his Mopar. "With what we were able to accomplish last year, we have high expectations. The new 2015 Dodge Charger R/T body is phenomenal for the driver – the vision is so much better, you feel safer, and it's easier to keep the car in the groove. I know the crew chiefs are looking forward to the better aerodynamics."

Also ready to do battle in a new DSR HEMI®-powered Dodge are veteran racers Ron Capps, who earned two wins last year, and 2012 Champion Beckman, who had nothing but positive feedback about his new ride.

"It's unbelievable," said Beckman of the new 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T. "I have never driven anything in my nitro Funny Car career other than the previous style Charger. It wasn't until I got into this one with all the improvements that I was like 'wow,' there is a better way to do this. The Mopar engineers nailed this car. It is beautiful looking, the performance is great and from a visibility standpoint, it is nothing but improvement."

Jeff Arend, Gary Densham and John Hale also will take to the drag strip aboard Dodge vehicles this season in Funny Car competition.

2012 NHRA Pro Stock champion Allen Johnson will begin his 20<sup>th</sup> season of competition along with his HEMI-engine tuner and father Roy Johnson after closing out 2014 with his ninth consecutive finish in the top-ten of the standings.

"I can't believe it has been 20 years since my dad, Roy and I, started on this road," said Johnson who made his Pro Stock debut aboard a Mopar in 1996. "To stay on top gets harder each year, but this team will push to be the best. In those two decades, the highlight has of course been our hard fought 2012 Championship, but another world title is always the goal."

In 2014, Johnson raced to four wins in six final round appearances and posted a 36-20 round-win record to finish sixth in the final standings. Mopar teammate and 2013 NHRA Pro Stock champ Jeg Coughlin Jr. finished last season with a semifinals appearance at Pomona and fifth place finish in the Countdown, but will be on hiatus from being behind the wheel on a full-time basis this year to focus on his family. That made preparations for the new season more of a challenge for the Johnson & Johnson Racing crew.

"We worked hard this off-season and testing has been a little different with new tires, new fuel, and relearning how to run both for optimum performance takes time," Johnson said. "The biggest challenge has been working as a one-car effort but we are working hard to rectify that. I think the KB and Elite teams will be back with a vengeance, but so will we, which means there will be at least eight cars that can win each race."

The Mopar team will have a new crew chief for the new-look yellow and black "Magneti Marelli Quality Auto Parts Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart this season. Adam Hornberger, who was Coughlin's crew chief last season and spent 14 years with Penske Shocks, will join car chief Mike Gott who has been with J&J Racing for 14 years, and assistant crew chief Mike Earl.

After making his Pro Stock debut in 1997, V. Gaines now celebrates his tenth season behind the wheel of a Dodge after Bob Glidden convinced him to join the Mopar ranks in 2006. He'll start the new season back in a Dodge Dart after a wreck in the opening event of the "Countdown to the Championship" forced a return to his Dodge Avenger for the balance of the playoffs.

"We're back in the new Dodge Dart after working our tail off during the off-season," Gaines said. "The new Dart looks really promising and we hope to visit the winners circle many times this year. We feel that with the new tires and new gasoline, it might take a little different approach to be competitive this year, and Madcap racing engines has also been working around the clock in preparing a new redesigned HEMI motor for 2015.

"I can't wait to let the clutch out in Pomona in our brand new Dodge Dart and put the competition on the trailer," Gaines adds. "This year, we really want to win at some of our favorite tracks. The Mopar Mile High Nationals in Denver is on that list because winning in front of the hometown crowd would be exhilarating. A win at Indianapolis

would especially be nice since they have expanded the points there, and Epping also would be on the wish list, because the fans are so friendly.”

While Mopar continues to honor its roots with its commitment and support of Sportsman Racing within the NHRA in 2015, it also recently acknowledged the accomplishments of a talented Mopar driver, 24-year-old Texan Austin Williams, during the 2014 season. Williams earned his second consecutive Tom Hoover Sportsman Challenge at the wheel of his Stock class 1972 Plymouth Duster by amassing the most points earned in a season during NHRA Sportsman sanctioned races. Williams was presented with \$4,260 check and a commemorative trophy by FCA representative Heath Crenwelge. Williams also won the inaugural title in 2013, named in honor of the “Father of the 426 HEMI®” Tom Hoover.

The 2015 NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series season begins this weekend with the NHRA Winternationals at Auto Club Raceway at Pomona with ESPN2 providing television coverage of the event with a qualifying show airing on Saturday, February 7 from 10 - 11:30 p.m. ET and the eliminations broadcast set for Sunday, Feb. 8 from 7:30 - 10:30 p.m. ET.

### **About Mopar Motorsports**

Mopar’s commitment to professional motorsports competition was established in the 1950s when a partnership ignited with drag racing pioneer Don Garlits, resulting in the breaking of numerous speed and performance barriers in HEMI®-powered vehicles over the next several decades. In 2015, Mopar looks to add to its streak of five NHRA World Championship titles in the Pro Stock (2012 and 2013) and Funny Car (2011, 2012, and 2014) categories in four years. While Mopar remains involved in a various professional motorsports series, it continues to honor its roots by being a proud supporter of amateur racing within the NHRA with its sponsorship of the HEMI Challenge and Mopar’s Tom Hoover Sportsman Challenge.

### **About Mopar Brand**

Mopar (a simple contraction of the words Motor and PARTs) was trademarked in 1937 with the launch of an antifreeze product, but it truly made its mark in the 1960s during the muscle-car era. From Mopar Performance Parts to enhance speed and handling for both road and racing use, the brand soon expanded to include technical service and customer support.

Today, Mopar is FCA’s service, parts and customer-care brand and distributes more than 500,000 parts and accessories in over 150 markets around the world. With more than 50 parts distribution centers and 27 customer contact hubs globally, Mopar integrates service, parts and customer-care operations in order to enhance dealer and customer support worldwide. Mopar is the source for genuine parts and accessories for FCA brands.

Mopar parts are engineered together with the same teams that create factory-authorized specifications for FCA vehicles. This offers a direct connection that no other aftermarket parts company can provide. A complete list of Mopar accessories and performance parts is available at: [www.mopar.com](http://www.mopar.com).

### **Mopar-first Features**

Mopar has introduced numerous industry-first features including:

- Vehicle-information apps: first to introduce smartphone vehicle-information applications, a new channel of communication with customers
- Electronic owner manuals: first to introduce traditional owner manuals in a DVD and brief user-guide format. First to offer complete vehicle-information kits in Spanish
- Wi-Fi: first to offer customers the ability to make their vehicle a wireless hot spot
- Wireless charging: first to introduce in-vehicle wireless charging for portable devices
- Electronic Vehicle Tracking System (EVTS): first to market with interactive vehicle tracking device that sends owner a text when vehicle is driven too fast or too far based on pre-set parameters
- wiADVISOR: first to provide factory-connected tablet technology in the service lane for instant vehicle diagnosis
- wiTECH: first to support vehicle diagnosis and software updates leveraging off-the-shelf personal computers and a dedicated wireless tool network
- 2011 Mopar Challenger Drag Pak: first to introduce a 500-plus cubic-inch V-10 drag-race package car

-###-

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