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Johnson Jr. Takes New 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car to Preliminary Pomona Pole

- Tommy Johnson Jr. seizes the provisional No. 1 spot in competition debut of the new Dodge Charger R/T during Friday qualifying at the NHRA Winternationals
- Added durability and increased strength of the new Charger body is showcased during a fiery qualifying run by defending NHRA Funny Car champ Matt Hagan
- Six Mopar-powered Dodge Funny Cars attempt to qualify for the NHRA Winternationals field
- “Magneti Marelli Quality Auto Parts Offered by Mopar” Dodge Dart NHRA Pro Stock driver Allen Johnson jumps from 17th to seventh in second qualifying session
- V. Gaines and Deric Kramer also post their Dodge Dart Pro Stock cars in the top twelve on Friday

February 5, 2015, Pomona, California - The process of more than a year's worth of time and investment spent in building, validating and testing the new 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T NHRA Funny Car paid off during Friday qualifying at the 55th Annual NHRA Winternationals, as Tommy Johnson Jr. raced his Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T to the preliminary No. 1 qualifier spot in the new body's competition debut.

On the first day of the season-opening 2015 NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing series event at Auto Club Raceway near Pomona, California, Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) driver Johnson clocked in at 12th after the first qualifying session with a 4.227-second elapsed time at 236.71 mph. In Q2 Johnson rocketed to the top, uncorking a 4.018/314.46 to claim the provisional pole.

“It seems like just yesterday we left here,” said Johnson, who finished strong in 2014 to claim the third spot in the standings. “We were on a roll last year; the Make-A-Wish car was really coming on at the end of the season. Throughout the off-season we kind of took a conservative approach. We elected not to make a lot of wholesale changes. We just worked on some weak areas.

“Having that conservative approach, we came back out with basically the combination we left here with, with a few minor tweaks. I think it showed – second run right out of the box, 4.01. The team's just picked up right where we left off, and it gives me a lot of confidence.

“The new body was a welcome addition. The vision is so much better; that actually paid off on that run. This is a hard place to see. The sun going down, the clutch dust in the car, it can be a very difficult track to see. Having the extra vision really, really helped.”

Matt Hagan got the defense of his 2014 NHRA Funny Car championship season off to an especially fiery start, wasting no time in testing the added durability and increased strength included in the months-long process used to bring the new body to life. After crossing the finish line in Q2 in his Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T (and moving to eighth in preliminary qualifying with a 4.090/310.70), an explosion rocked Hagan's machine and fire engulfed the DSR driver's windshield. After getting the car stopped, Hagan was able to exit quickly and safely, none worse for wear.

“It was a wild ride, a hot one too,” said Hagan, who advanced to the final round at both Pomona stops in 2014, with a runner-up at the Winternationals and a victory at the NHRA Finals to clinch his title. “This new body is in one piece and that was a big boomer. Honestly, that was one of the bigger ones that I've had. To lift the rear end and tires up that big for that long, it was obviously a pretty big boomer.”

In their debut of new 2015 Dodge Charger R/T Funny Cars, Hagan's teammates Ron Capps (4.102/311.34) and Jack Beckman (4.485/204.35) were ranked tenth and 17th, respectively. Dodge driver Gary Densham (4.182/306.12) was 13th after Friday's two sessions, and John Hale (4.440/224.02) was 16th.

"Magneti Marelli Quality Auto Parts Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart NHRA Pro Stock driver Allen Johnson, entering his 20th season of NHRA competition, shook the tires early in his first qualifying shot and was listed 17th. The 2012 NHRA Pro Stock champ improved significantly in Q2, racing his Mopar Dodge Dart up the charts, jumping to No. 7 after a 6.546/211.89 pass.

"That first run, we got behind the eight ball," said Johnson, who debuted new yellow-and-black Magneti Marelli colors on his Dart. "We have a threat of rain tomorrow, so we thought it best to be cautious and make a good run, and maybe not gamble on a great run. That's what we went out and did. Being first pair (to run) in the past has been a nemesis for us for a long time, so maybe we're over that. If it doesn't rain, it'll be better tomorrow, because it will be cooler. We're in good position to get after it and maybe grab that top spot."

Deric Kramer (6.614/210.37), behind the wheel of his brand-new Dart, was ranked 11th after Friday. Celebrating his own anniversary — 10 years behind the wheel of a Dodge Pro Stock car — V. Gaines raced his Mopar-powered Dodge Dart to the provisional 12th spot on the strength of a 6.623/210.57 effort.

ESPN2 will provide television coverage of the 55th Annual NHRA Winternationals with a qualifying show airing on Saturday, February 7, from 10:00 - 11:30 p.m. ET and the eliminations broadcast set for Sunday, February 8, from 7:30 - 10:30 p.m. ET.

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.

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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

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