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DSR Driver Johnson Jr. No. 2 in New Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car after NHRA Winternationals Qualifying

- After a rain-shortened final day of qualifying at Pomona, Tommy Johnson Jr. will begin eliminations from the second position in his new 2015 Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T NHRA Funny Car
- Mopar Express Lane 2015 Dodge Charger R/T driver Matt Hagan enjoys a much less eventful second day of qualifying, takes No. 12 spot
- A total of five Mopar-powered Dodge Funny Cars will race for the win on Sunday at Auto Club Raceway
- Allen Johnson will start 12th in his "Magneti Marelli Quality Auto Parts Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart as his hunt for a second NHRA Pro Stock championship begins
- V. Gaines and Deric Kramer will join AJ to form a trio of Mopar-powered Dodge Dart Pro Stock drivers taking aim at a season-opening win
- Special guest Mark Trostle, Head of SRT, Viper and Mopar Design, and instrumental in the creation of the 2015 Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car, sees new body make competition debut at Pomona

February 7, 2015, Pomona, California - Tommy Johnson Jr. will start second in his new 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T NHRA Funny Car body after wet weather washed out the final round of qualifying on Saturday at the season-opening 55th Annual NHRA Winternationals. Johnson will draw Jeff Arend first as he leads a field of five Mopar-powered Dodge Funny Cars into elimination rounds on Sunday at Auto Club Raceway near Pomona, California. In Pro Stock, Allen Johnson was quickest of a trio of Mopar Dodge Dart cars to make the field.

Knocked off his perch on the preliminary pole which he seized on Friday with a 4.018-second pass at 314.46 mph, Tommy Johnson Jr. was in the last pair to run in the third qualifying session. The Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) star clocked a solid 4.044/313.07 in his Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T but it wasn't enough to reclaim his spot at the top of the charts.

Conservative was the watchword for Matt Hagan and his DSR team on Saturday. The new 2015 Dodge Charger R/T body performed as designed after a fiery explosion rocked the defending champ's machine during Friday's second session, remaining in one piece despite a massive "boomer," but fire damage necessitated the use of a backup 2015 Mopar Express Lane/Rocky Boots Charger body. Hagan recorded a 4.174/252.52 in Q3; safely in the field at 12th, the gloves will no doubt come off when he battles Tony Pedregon in round one.

"It says a lot for my team," said Hagan of his Mopar Express Lane Dodge crew, who stayed at the track into the early Saturday morning hours to replace wiring on the car damaged by flames. "There are not too many jobs where you work all day long and then half the night. I come in late and leave early, and they come in early and leave late. It makes me have so much more respect for them because they have such a passion for this; it's not just about a paycheck. They do it because they love it and to me that is special because they do whatever it takes to get the job done."

Ron Capps made the most of the only qualifying session on Saturday, moving his 2015 DSR Dodge Charger R/T from 10th to sixth with a 4.037/317.94, setting up a first-round duel with Alexis DeJoria. Dodge Charger driver John Hale (13th, 4.193/295.34) will face Cruz Pedregon, and No. 16 qualifier Gary Densham (6.957/112.93) will post his Dodge against top qualifier Courtney Force.

The rare rainy day in Southern California dealt Jack Beckman some tough luck in the season opener. Not qualified heading into Saturday, a blower explosion in Q3 left the Infinite Hero Dodge driver hoping for one last shot. After

thrashing to get the car ready, and with cooler track temperatures likely giving Beckman a great chance to break into the field, intermittent rain showers washed out the final session, ending the 2012 Funny Car champ's chances of competing on race day.

"I am disappointed but I think a lot of our sport is about timing," Beckman said. "If this was November and we didn't qualify I would be devastated. I think the reason that I'm not feeling that bad right now is that I recognize that there are 23 races left, we are going to do some fantastic stuff this year with the Infinite Hero team and we are going to challenge for the championship."

Mark Trostle, Head of SRT, Viper and Mopar Design, tasked with recreating the distinct design of the production version of the 2015 Dodge Charger into the new 2015 Mopar Funny Car body, made a special trip out to Pomona to see the new race machine in its competition debut. It was the first NHRA event and a "Baptism By Nitro" for Trostle.

"The most surprising thing about my first NHRA drag racing experience wasn't related to seeing the car we designed take its first runs, but actually how it made me feel physically," said Trostle, who was also a key part of the team that brought to life the current Mopar Dodge Dart Pro Stock car. "Standing at the starting line and having 10,000 horsepower pressing on your chest when (the cars) take off, the smells and the sounds, having my face covered in I don't know what, tire rubber and dust — it was just an awesome experience that you just don't get watching it on television. I'm totally hooked."

Inclement weather also bit "Magneti Marelli Quality Auto Parts Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart driver Allen Johnson. Despite being just a tick quicker during Pro Stock Q3, bettering his 6.546 run from Friday with a 6.545, AJ dropped to 12th after others in the field made bigger improvements during the session. The 20-year Team Mopar veteran anticipated moving back up the charts in his final attempt, but Mother Nature had other ideas. Up first for AJ in eliminations is former teammate Vincent Nobile.

In addition to the weather, the loss of the final qualifying run, as all teams are working to adjust to the introduction of a new fuel formula this weekend, also played a part in shuffling the Pro Stock ladder.

"We didn't go the right way with the new fuel tune up," said AJ, seeking his second final-round appearance and first victory at the Winternationals. "I talked to several people and everyone seems to be guessing at it right now. Some hit on it and others didn't, and we didn't. That hurt us in this morning's session, so we really wanted to get in a last run because we went way the other way with our adjustments and were hoping to be a lot faster. We'll go out there tomorrow and do our best."

"We wanted another shot at it just to answer some lingering questions we have on fuel and tune up," said Adam Hornberger, in his first race as crew chief on the Magneti Marelli/Mopar Dodge. "The car set up was close and conservative because we shook the tires on our first run (on Friday), but we were slowly creeping up on it. We were hoping to finalize everything for tomorrow's first round, but hopefully the weather is pretty close to what we had today so we can keep the same set up and just go with our gut feeling on the tune up."

No. 13 after Saturday, Dodge Dart pilot V. Gaines (6.571/211.03) will start Sunday against Pro Stock rookie Drew Skillman. Deric Kramer (14th, 6.595/209.79) will line up his Mopar HEMI-powered Dodge Dart against Rodger Brogdon in round one.

ESPN2 will provide television coverage of the 55th Annual NHRA Winternationals with an 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

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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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- 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
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- 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
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- 2011 Mopar Challenger Drag Pak: first to introduce a 500-plus cubic-inch V-10 drag-race package car

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