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Hagan Drives All-New 2015 Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car to Debut Win in All-Mopar NHRA Winternationals Final Round

- After a year of development, Matt Hagan launches the new 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T NHRA Funny Car with a victory in its inaugural race
- Mopar Express Lane/Rocky Boots driver Hagan defeats Don Schumacher Racing teammate Ron Capps to win the all-Mopar Dodge final at Auto Club Raceway near Pomona, California
- 2014 Funny Car champ Hagan begins his title defense with his fourth straight final-round appearance at Pomona and his first NHRA Winternationals win
- The triumph of the new 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T marks the second time in less than a year that an NHRA race body developed by Mopar and FCA US has been victorious in its competition debut
- Forced to turn to a backup 2015 body after an explosion during Friday qualifying, Hagan rallies from the No. 12 starting position to capture his 15th career win in 30 final rounds
- Capps gives Mopar and Dodge a one-two punch with his runner-up appearance
- "Magneti Marelli Quality Auto Parts Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart Pro Stock driver Allen Johnson begins his season by reaching the quarterfinals

February 8, 2015, Pomona, California - A dramatic explosion and a starting spot in the bottom part of the field couldn't keep Matt Hagan from making history at the season-opening National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Winternationals on Sunday, as the 2014 NHRA Funny Car champ commenced his title defense by racing the all-new 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T to victory at Auto Club Raceway near Pomona, California, in the body's competition debut.

The win represents the triumphant culmination of a year-long commitment in which the Mopar brand, along with FCA US engineers and additional personnel, worked hand-in-hand with Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) drivers and teams to validate, test and create a more durable, driver-friendly winning machine that also features enhanced styling cues from the 2015 production Dodge Charger. It also marks the second time in less than a year that an NHRA race body developed by Mopar and FCA US has been victorious in its competition debut — last season Allen Johnson steered the Dodge Dart Pro Stock body to a NHRA Gatornationals win in its maiden voyage.

"Congratulations from everyone at Mopar to Don Schumacher Racing for putting two new vehicles into the final, and to Matt Hagan for driving the 2015 Dodge Charger R/T to the winner's circle in its debut," said Pietro Gorlier, President and CEO - Mopar Brand Service, Parts and Customer Care. "What a great way to reward a year's worth of time, investment and hard work that went into the extensive process of designing and building a fantastic new 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car. To have both the new Dodge Charger and the Dodge Dart win Wally trophies in both of their first times on track in the past year is a testament to Mopar's ability to provide quality products. This is also a fantastic way to follow up on Matt's 2014 NHRA Championship and we appreciate the team's efforts in working to defend that title this season."

After a flame-filled eruption during Friday qualifying forced Hagan to turn to a second 2015 Mopar Express Lane/Rocky Boots Dodge Charger R/T body, and after rain on Saturday washed out his final chance to move up the charts, the two-time and defending champion began his road to a Winternationals event title all the way back from the No. 12 position. The DSR star ended the day of the higher-qualified Tony Pedregon in round one, hitting the timing strip with a 4.065-second elapsed time at 318.84 mph to his opponent's 4.381/227.54.

In the second round DSR driver Hagan took the win over fellow Dodge driver John Hale, who fouled out after he double-stepped the pedal on the starting line. The two-time NHRA Funny Car champ lined up against Del Worsham in the semifinals, advancing to his fourth straight final at Pomona and second consecutive at the Winternationals with a 4.068/316.75 to Worsham's 4.081/314.90.

Teammate Ron Capps left first in the all-2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T final round duel and briefly held the lead, but Hagan, previously 0-3 against Capps in final round battles, reversed that trend and pulled away to secure the Wally with a winning 4.011/320.89 to Capps' 4.078/314.90.

The victory was Hagan's first at the Winternationals, fourth at Auto Club Raceway (also home to the season-ending NHRA Finals) and 15th of his career in 30 final round appearances.

"Friday was unexpected. It caught me off guard," said Hagan, who also captured the Funny Car championship in 2011. "It went through the (finish line) lights and banged the blower, threw the rods out of it and the fire just got pretty big pretty quick. The guys put in the work; I think they finished up at 3:30 Saturday morning, then got a few hours of sleep and came back Saturday ready to go.

"It speaks volumes for Dickie Venables, Mike Knudsen and these guys that put our car together. They worked so hard to put a good car underneath me. It's cool for me to say that I'm the first to win with this new 2015 Dodge Charger.

"It's crazy how things change so quickly in a couple of days. I didn't know which sponsor to thank because we were running the Mopar Express Lane scheme and then had to switch to Rocky Boots but I can't thank them all enough. Without their support we wouldn't be out here. That win right there was for Don (Schumacher). We really missed him out here this weekend."

Fighting out of the sixth slot, Capps notched a holeshot win over Alexis DeJoria, laid down a solo run of 4.104/313.88 after engine problems prevented Bob Bode (who scored a round one upset over John Force, Hagan's foe in the last three Pomona finals) from staging his machine in the quarterfinals, and was first off the start and first to the finish in the semis against Force's fellow Camaro driver, Robert Hight.

Tommy Johnson Jr., the No. 2 qualifier, was one of four Mopar HEMI-powered Dodge Funny Car drivers to advance to the second round and was quickest of all competitors in the opening stanza, using a 4.045/315.19 run to defeat Jeff Arend. In the quarterfinals DSR driver Johnson's 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger was edged out by Hight, losing by mere inches on a "baby" holeshot, his .089 reaction time and 4.080/306.33 not enough to beat Hight's .081 paired with a 4.085/313.29.

Denied a chance to move his "Magneti Marelli Quality Auto Parts Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart up from the No. 12 spot after the final Pro Stock qualifying session was cancelled, Allen Johnson faced former teammate and No. 5 qualifier Vincent Nobile to begin his day. The 20-year Team Mopar veteran was quicker off the line than Nobile, with a .013 reaction time compared to his opponent's .036, reaching the finish first despite a slower 6.574 elapsed time to Nobile's 6.561.

AJ came out on the losing end of a close quarterfinals finish. The Greeneville, Tennessee, native and event runner-up Drew Skillman were dead even with 6.595 elapsed times (with Allen Johnson owning the faster speed at 211.10 mph), but Skillman was just a touch quicker at the starting tree, with a .028 reaction time to AJ's .033. Skillman's margin of victory was approximately 20 inches.

"Being first pair out has been a problem for us in the past, but today we actually made some progress," said Johnson, who competes with HEMI powerplants supplied by his father, Roy Johnson, engine builder for the Johnson & Johnson Racing team. "We always seem to shake the tires, or the car does something crazy and doesn't get down the track cleanly, but instead we made some gains today. Our new crew chief, Adam Hornberger, made some changes, and as first pair out for the second round we lost a very close race, but we figured out how to get down the track. Even if it was a loss, I feel like we made some momentous, fantastic gains today with the new fuel, a new crew chief and a team that is working really well together. It's a good start."

No. 13 qualifier and Team Mopar Dodge Dart driver V. Gaines also fell to Skillman in the first round and Deric Kramer

was unable to race his Dart past first-round foe Rodger Brogdon. Jason Line took the Pro Stock title win over Skillman in the final round of eliminations.

Next up for Team Mopar competitors is the second of 24 events on the 2015 NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series schedule, the NHRA Nationals at Wild Horse Pass Motorsports Park near Phoenix, scheduled for February 20–22.

2015 NHRA Championship Points Standings (following the NHRA Winternationals in Pomona):

PRO STOCK (season wins in parentheses)

1. Jason Line – 123 (1)
2. Drew Skillman – 97
3. Erica Enders Stevens – 81
4. Rodger Brogdon – 80
5. Chris McGaha – 55
6. Larry Morgan – 54

7a. Allen Johnson (Dodge Dart) – 52

- 7b. Shane Gray – 52
- 9a. Greg Anderson – 34
- 9b. Vincent Nobile – 34

13. V Gaines (Dodge Dart) – 31

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. Matt Hagan (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 107 (1)

2. Ron Capps (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 94

3. Del Worsham – 74
4. Robert Hight – 73
5. Courtney Force – 61

6. Tommy Johnson Jr. (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 60

7. John Hale (2014 Dodge Charger R/T) – 51

8. Bob Bode – 46
9. John Force – 40
10. Cruz Pedregon – 38

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.

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

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