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Three 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T NHRA Funny Car Drivers Qualify in Top Half of Field at Gatornationals

- Infinite Hero Mopar Dodge Funny Car driver Jack Beckman holds the fifth spot and will bid for his first career NHRA Gatornationals win on Sunday
- Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car driver Matt Hagan jumps to No. 6 in his final qualifying attempt
- Tommy Johnson Jr. improves to seventh in his Make-A-Wish Dodge, giving DSR Mopar Dodge Funny Cars the 5-7 spots
- Perfect thus far in 2015, Hagan aims to keep his unbeaten streak alive
- A half dozen HEMI-powered Dodge machines qualify for the Funny Car field
- No. 6 Pro Stock qualifier Johnson has his "Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar" Dodge pointed toward a Gainesville three-peat
- Three Mopar-powered Pro Stockers will vie for the Gatornationals Wally trophy
- Revamped Mopar display debuts on Manufacturer's Midway at Gainesville Raceway

March 14, 2015, Gainesville, Florida - A trio of 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car drivers — Jack Beckman, Matt Hagan and Tommy Johnson — will begin elimination rounds for the 46th Annual NHRA Gatornationals fighting from the top half of the field, while in Pro Stock "Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart driver Allen Johnson will start sixth as he chases a third straight victory at Gainesville Raceway.

Ranked fifth after two Friday sessions with a 4.081-second elapsed time (E.T.) at 309.56 mph, Beckman still held the No. 5 spot following his first run (4.728/174.03) on Saturday as well as after his final attempt, a 4.125/306.46. The Don Schumacher Racing Infinite Hero Dodge Charger R/T pilot will meet Chad Head for round one in search of his first NHRA Gatornationals win.

"After Friday qualifying I was happy about coming off the trailer and having a good run, but then the second and third run we didn't make it down the track," said Beckman, the 2012 NHRA Funny Car champ. "While we knew we were solidly qualified no matter what on the strength of that first run, you still don't want to go into race day three runs in a row not going down the race track.

"Our last pass wasn't a perfect run but it was a run that we learned from and it was a decent E.T. slip and a confidence builder. A lot of times just that time slip will help change your perspective. This is a sport where you have to be aggressive and that last run will give (crew chief) Jimmy (Prock) the confidence to stay on the offense when we go out there tomorrow."

Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T DSR Funny Car driver Matt Hagan capped off qualifying with his quickest run of the weekend, earning two bonus points, the sixth starting position and a battle with Alexis DeJoria thanks to a 4.083/314.17. With wins at the first two 2015 NHRA events at Pomona and Phoenix, the defending champ will attempt to preserve his undefeated record thus far in 2015 NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series competition.

"We just want to turn four more win lights on and keep this thing rolling, but we need to step up because Alexis (DeJoria) is going to run hard so we just have to be right there with her," said Hagan, who is riding a three-race win streak counting his victory at the season-ending 2014 NHRA Finals last November. "We're going to have to work

really hard on race day. Obviously it's not working out as we've hoped so far in qualifying, but that's racing. It just makes us work harder. We won from the 12 spot at Pomona and we've won from the No. 14 spot before. You've just got to be in it to win it."

Hagan also welcomed the presence of team owner Don Schumacher, who was back at the track after addressing recent health issues. "It's awesome to see Don out here," said Hagan. "We need him out here to motivate us and we want to put him in the winner's circle tomorrow."

Tommy Johnson Jr. grabbed one qualifying point with a 4.088/311.63 in Q4, moving from 11th up to seventh in his Make-A-Wish Dodge. He'll face Robert Hight in his opening match. Like his DSR teammates Hagan and Johnson, Ron Capps also delivered his best performance in his last qualifying shot, jumping three spots to ninth in his Mopar Dodge on the strength of a 4.108/313.29. Capps will begin Gatornationals eliminations against Courtney Force.

Rounding out the six-car Mopar-powered Dodge contingent on Sunday is John Hale (4.304/234.04, No. 14) who will pit his Jim Dunn Racing Charger against 16-time Funny Car champ John Force, and Blake Alexander (4.349/223.69, No. 15) who will battle Del Worsham.

Allen Johnson began the day on a positive note with the announcement that Richie Stevens Jr. will take the wheel of a Dodge Dart Pro Stock car and join Johnson's J&J Racing team for at least ten events this season. Johnson kept the momentum rolling in his first qualifying attempt on Saturday, posting a 6.530/212.79 to go along with his pair of 6.53 runs on Friday and earning one bonus point for being third-quickest of the session.

After shutting down on his fourth and final qualifying attempt after a misfire, Johnson will start sixth and lineup against Drew Skillman as he seeks his third-consecutive NHRA Gatornationals win. The Greeneville, Tennessee, native and J&J Racing team owner and driver's match with Skillman will mark his 699th round of NHRA competition in his 20-year racing career.

"We've put together a good race car and that (his final qualifying attempt) would likely have been our best run of the weekend as we were expecting to run in the mid .52s to move up a few spots, but it wasn't meant to be," said Johnson. "We had a spark plug fail on that last run. It's something that we've actually had happen a few times since changing to this new fuel. We thought we had that figured out until it reared its ugly head again on that run.

"It's a bit unnerving to have that happen on your last run before race day but we'll get it worked out. The car is working well and we've started out in sixth plenty of times so we can go into Sunday with plenty of confidence."

Two drivers will join Johnson to form a trio of Mopar-powered Dodge Pro Stockers in the NHRA Gatornationals elimination rounds. V. Gaines (6.603/211.36) saved his best run for Q4 in his Dodge Dart and will hope to use that performance as a springboard from the 13th starting position and a first-round date with Shane Gray. Alan Prusiensky (6.662/208.94) wheeled his Dodge Avenger to the 15th spot and has Jason Line as his opening-round foe.

Revamped Mopar display debuts at Gainesville Raceway

Mopar fans attending select NHRA national events this season, including the NHRA Gatornationals, will have the chance to visit the newly revamped Mopar display located in the Manufacturer's Midway area. Fans stopping by the interactive display will receive a commemorative Mopar poster that highlights many of the brand's achievements over more than six decades after registering to enter a year-long contest.

Registration also provides visitors of all ages with the opportunity to test their skills in a reaction time game and tire-change challenge, with Mopar merchandise available as prizes for top performers. One lucky winner per weekend will walk away with a pair of VIP tickets to experience the Don Schumacher Racing hospitality area on Sunday race day. A complimentary photo booth is also available for fans to be photographed with the sixth Wally trophy won by 2012 NHRA Pro Stock World Champion Allen Johnson at the 2014 Mopar Mile-High NHRA Nationals near Denver.

Two hours of NHRA Gatornationals qualifying coverage is scheduled to air on ESPN2 and ESPN2HD beginning at 1:30 a.m. EDT on Sunday, March 14, with a two-hour re-air beginning at 7 a.m. Two hours of eliminations coverage will air on Sunday starting at 7 p.m. EDT.

2015 NHRA Championship Points Standings

(following the NHRA Gatornationals Qualifying at Gainesville):

PRO STOCK (season wins in parentheses)

1. Rodger Brogdon – 244 (1)
- 2t. Erica Enders Stevens – 217
- 2t. Jason Line – 217 (1)
4. Drew Skillman – 209
5. Chris McGaha – 180
6. Shane Gray – 146
7. **Allen Johnson (Dodge Dart) – 142**
8. Larry Morgan – 123
9. Greg Anderson – 121
10. Vincent Nobile – 99
13. **V Gaines (Dodge Dart) – 94**

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. **Matt Hagan (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 267 (2)**
2. Del Worsham – 213
3. Robert Hight – 177
4. **Ron Capps (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 161**
5. Courtney Force – 157
6. **Tommy Johnson Jr. (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 152**
7. Alexis DeJoria – 142
8. Cruz Pedregon – 137
- 9t. John Force – 114
- 9t. Chad Head – 114
11. **John Hale (2014 Dodge Charger R/T) – 82**
15. **Jack Beckman (2015 Dodge Charger R/T) – 38**

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.

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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