

## **Pritchett Powers Mopar Dodge Top Fuel Dragster to First Win of Season at NHRA Southern Nationals**

- Leah Pritchett races Mopar Dodge/FireAde Top Fuel dragster to first win of season at Atlanta Dragway, sixth overall of her career
- Victory is third this season for a Mopar Dodge//SRT driver in NHRA Nitro classes
- Matt Hagan takes Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car to runner-up finish, third final round of season
- Hagan, Jack Beckman put two Mopar Dodge Funny Car machines in semifinals
- Tony Schumacher qualifies for 350th consecutive Top Fuel event, comes up short in bid for first Atlanta win
- Mike Volkman captures back-to-back Dodge Top Finisher awards in Super Stock, Thomas Auger earns honor in Stock Eliminator
- More info on Mopar in NHRA available at <http://blog.mopar.com>
- New Dodge Garage ([www.dodgegarage.com/](http://www.dodgegarage.com/)), a digital content hub for muscle car and race enthusiasts launches; will include highlights from NHRA season

May 6, 2018, Auburn Hills, Mich. - Leah Pritchett raced her Mopar Dodge/FireAde Top Fuel dragster to victory on Sunday at the 38th annual NHRA Southern Nationals, earning her first win of the season and first at Atlanta Dragway in Commerce, Georgia, as well as the sixth overall of her Top Fuel career.

The win is the third in seven events this season for a Mopar Dodge//SRT driver in the NHRA Nitro classes (Top Fuel and Funny Car). Pritchett's Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) teammate, Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T driver Matt Hagan, added a runner-up finish in Funny Car for the brands, and moved up one spot into the third position in the standings.

Pritchett and her Mopar Dodge Top Fuel team were on point this weekend at Atlanta starting with qualifying, where the DSR driver collected five important bonus points as well as the No. 4 starting position. She was machine-like in recording seven runs in the three-second range out of a possible eight during qualifying and eliminations, including in all four rounds on Sunday starting with a 3.903-second elapsed time (ET) at 293.73 mph to beat Pat Dakin.

In the quarterfinals, Pritchett and Bill Litton had identical reaction times, but the similarities ended there, as the Mopar Dodge zoomed to a stout 3.841/322.50 run while Litton faltered shortly after launch. In the semifinals against Mike Salinas, Pritchett jumped to an early lead and never looked back to advance to her first final round of the year and ninth of her career.

Matched against Blake Alexander in the final round, Pritchett was the picture of consistency, clocking a 3.874/322.42 run to earn her sixth career win. Alexander's lap of 4.287/199.43 wouldn't have been enough to break up Pritchett's dream weekend, but it didn't matter as he was disqualified for leaving the starting line early.

Hagan, the 2016 event winner at Atlanta Dragway, started in the back half of the field at No. 11, then dispatched a trio of racers ranked higher on the qualifying charts on his march to the final round. The DSR driver recorded the second-quickest pass of the opening round to send home No. 6 qualifier Jonnie Lindberg, setting up the first of two battles with Mopar-powered Dodge DSR teammates.

In the quarterfinals against No. 3 qualifier Tommy Johnson Jr., Hagan and his stablemate were equally matched in reaction time. Hagan trailed early on, but as Johnson Jr. lost traction just before the 330-foot mark, the Virginia cattle

rancher was able to surge head for the win. Next up for Hagan was Infinite Hero Dodge Charger R/T driver and No. 10 qualifier Jack Beckman in the semifinals. Beckman had a slight early advantage, but Hagan was able to put his Mopar Express Lane Dodge out front just past the 60-foot mark and hold on for the round win.

In the final round — the 49th of his career and third of the year — Hagan was first off the starting line against No. 1 qualifier Courtney Force, with a superior .047-second reaction time to his opponent's slower .072. It wasn't enough to hold up for the win, as Force was able to pass Hagan near the 330-foot mark and pull away for the victory.

Although Beckman also struggled during qualifying, the two-time Southern Nationals champion came alive during eliminations, ousting the higher qualified J.R. Todd in round one, defeating Bob Tasca III in the quarterfinals and giving Hagan a run for his money before ultimately coming up short in the semis. Johnson Jr. and the Make-A-Wish Dodge Funny Car team followed up their solid No. 3 qualifying spot with a victory over Dodge Charger R/T driver Jim Campbell before falling to Hagan in round two.

Mopar-powered NAPA Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car pilot Ron Capps, a two-time Atlanta race winner and the defending event champ, opened eliminations by facing off with longtime rival John Force. In the 92nd meeting between the past Funny Car World Champions, No. 12 qualifier Capps was first out of the gate but hazed the tires, allowing No. 5 starter Force to make up ground by the 330-foot mark. Capps maintained control and was able to pedal his racecar, and when Force struck the tires at about 500 feet, Capps pointed his Dodge down the strip to claim the round win.

Capps' bid for an Atlanta repeat ended in the quarterfinals. First off the line once again against Cruz Pedregon, he smoked the tires early in the run. This time Capps was unable to recover, slowing to a 5.792/119.76 pass as Pedregon drove away for the victory.

Mopar-powered U.S. Army Top Fuel driver Tony Schumacher added to his remarkable list of career accomplishment's this weekend, qualifying for his 350th consecutive race, a streak dating back to the 2003 Topeka event. The eight-time Top Fuel World Champion and 83-time event winner started No. 5 in seeking to check off one of the few career milestones he doesn't own – a victory at Atlanta.

The runner-up last year at the Southern Nationals, and five times overall at the venue, Schumacher matched up against No. 12 qualifier Litton in round one. Unfortunately, Schumacher will continue to chase that elusive Atlanta victory, as Litton recorded a winning 3.915/315.56 pass to the DSR's driver's losing 3.925/311.27 effort.

### **Mopar Dodge//SRT NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series: Notes & Quotes**

#### **Pietro Gorlier, Head of Parts and Service (Mopar), FCA**

"Thanks to Leah Pritchett for putting the Mopar and Dodge brands in the winner's circle at the NHRA Southern Nationals at Atlanta Dragway. Leah's victory also marks the third for a Mopar-powered driver in seven NHRA events and puts an exclamation point on our brand's early-season success on the drag strip."

#### **Steve Beahm, Head of Passenger Cars, Dodge//SRT, Chrysler and FIAT, FCA North America**

"Hats off to Leah Pritchett for earning her first victory of the season at the NHRA Southern Nationals. With three wins early on in the season, it's clear the combination of Dodge, Mopar and the Don Schumacher Racing organization is a successful one."

#### **Leah Pritchett, Mopar Dodge/FireAde Top Fuel Dragster (No. 4 Qualifier – 3.788 ET)**

Rd.1: (.086-second reaction time, 3.903 seconds at 293.73 mph) beat No. 13 Pat Dakin (.119/6.389/100.55)

Rd.2: (.104/3.841/322.50) beat No. 12 Bill Litton (.104/11.552/82.25)

Rd.3: (.081/3.907/312.42) beat No. 8 Mike Salinas (.028/4.212/211.66)

Rd.4: (.075/3.874/322.42) beat No. 10 Blake Alexander (-.006/4.287/199.43)

"This win feels incredible. It's been a while, but I think a (win) drought is all relative. This FireAde/Mopar/U.S. Army

team knows what it's like to win and we still have that in our hearts and that's what we grasp to. And, yes, we may have been the only Top Fuel car for DSR that advanced out of the first round today, but we felt the world of support from the entire organization knowing they were all behind us as we made our run to this win today. Thank you, Don Schumacher, for believing in me and giving me a chance two years ago. And for all of Don Schumacher Racing, all the fans, all the guys back at the shop that put those race cars together and keep us safe, this one is for you. It was a special weekend here in Atlanta for a lot of reasons, including the ability fulfill a dream of Make-A-Wish child Luci Toman. She is a true inspiration and it was great having her with me all weekend. We both got our dreams to come true this weekend."

**Matt Hagan, Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car**

**(No. 11 Qualifier – 4.054 ET)**

Rd.1: (.087-second reaction time, 4.106 seconds at 299.46 mph) beat No. 6 Jonnie Lindberg (.134/4.192/253.04)

Rd.2: (.071/4.200/290.26) beat to No. 3 Tommy Johnson Jr. (.073/4.794/178.99)

Rd.3: (.075/4.111/309.70) beat to No. 10 Jack Beckman (.077/4.224/293.41)

Rd.4: (.047/4.148/291.13) lost to No. 1 Courtney Force (.072/4.046/313.73)

"All in all, a good day. It's like old school match racing with this track prep. (Crew chief) Dickie Venables did a great job adapting. I can't say enough about my Mopar Express Lane Dodge team. We had a hole out, killed the tree. It was all there for the taking, it was just a matter of it all coming together, but hey, it's drag racing. We'll go to Topeka and get it done."

*On starting race day from the back half of the field:*

"I've won from the back, I've won from the front, it's just a matter of being in it to win it."

**Jack Beckman, Infinite Hero Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car**

**(No. 10 Qualifier – 4.038 ET)**

Rd.1: (.059-second reaction time, 4.410 seconds at 215.27 mph) beat No. 7 J.R. Todd (.069/9.681/79.05)

Rd.2: (.081/4.146/304.74) beat to No. 15 Bob Tasca III (.094/4.181/296.11)

Rd.3: (.077/4.224/293.41) lost to No. 11 Matt Hagan (.075/4.111/309.70)

"I'm a competitor and I'm always upset when we get beat but you've got to recognize big picture. We did a good job this weekend. We went to the semifinals; we lost to another Mopar, so we know a Don Schumacher Dodge is going to be in the final round. We're going a long way towards inching towards that championship so there's no reason not to feel optimistic moving forward."

**Tommy Johnson Jr., Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car**

**(No. 3 Qualifier – 3.968 ET)**

Rd.1: (.096-second reaction time, 4.169 seconds at 247.11 mph) beat No. 14 Jim Campbell (.118/6.098/111.29)

Rd.2: (.073/4.794/178.99) lost to No. 11 Matt Hagan (.071/4.200/290.26)

"We had a really good race car and I felt confident going into the day. It's been a really hard track to navigate. There's bumps out there and they're experimenting with track prep. We seemed to have been adapting pretty well, but unfortunately the bump got us the second round. It was in the lead and pulling away then hits the bump and comes loose. It's aggravating, but we'll keep learning and see if we can't make what we learned today work for us down the road and make us better."

**Ron Capps, NAPA Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car**

**(No. 12 Qualifier – 4.107 ET)**

Rd.1: (.055-second reaction time, 4.397 seconds at 259.11 mph) beat No. 5 John Force (.093/4.403/238.69)

Rd.2: (.075/5.792/119.76) lost to No. 4 Cruz Pedregon (.084/4.117/298.34)

"We came in as defending champions in this race last year. It's a tricky track with tricky conditions and we thought

we were going to take the NAPA Dodge in the winner's circle again, but we got stuck in the left lane. It's a little more difficult to get down there. We had Cruz Pedregon, who's probably got the toughest car right now in the class. You're always disappointed when you don't win but I think we made huge gains as far as where we started out Friday in qualifying. We're going to go on to Topeka, where we won last year and see if we can't get back in winner's circle there and start the streak that we did last year."

### **Tony Schumacher, U.S. Army Top Fuel Dragster**

#### **(No. 5 Qualifier – 3.794 ET)**

Rd.1: (.117-second reaction time, 3.925 seconds at 311.27 mph) lost to No. 12 Bill Litton (.076/3.915/315.56),

"I knew we were in trouble as soon as I hit the gas. Litton had only gone down the track once all weekend and we weren't taking him lightly. We were prepared to make a run in the 3.70s. Hats off to him for making it down the track again, we just couldn't get by him on seven cylinders. You do everything you can to be ready, but sometimes in racing something out of your control costs you. This U.S. Army team is filled with incredibly talented and smart people, and we will not give up. I know we will win races. It's on to Topeka now."

### **Mopar Dodge//SRT NHRA Sportsman Spotlight**

For the second consecutive event, veteran Mopar-powered NHRA Sportsman racer and South Carolina native Mike Volkman drove his 2000 Chrysler Sebring to the Dodge Top Finisher Award in the NHRA Super Stock class, advancing all the way to the semifinals at the NHRA Southern Nationals.

Volkman, a multiple-time Super Stock event winner, qualified No. 16 out of 50 class entries in his Mopar 318 small block V8-powered GT/MA Sebring. He took out Ricky Pennington, Dave Rampy and Bill Skillman before his day ended against Byron Worner, who left first en route to the double-breakout win.

In Stock Eliminator, Thomas Auger drove his 383 Mopar-powered H/SA 1963 Dodge to the third round, good enough to claim Dodge Top Finisher honors in the class. The Marco Island, Florida, resident bested Greg Lubben and Brian Martel before losing to Jeff Longhany.

The Dodge Top Finisher award, now in its second year, awards \$500 to the Stock Eliminator and Super Stock drivers who advance the furthest behind the wheel of a Mopar-powered Dodge, Chrysler, or Plymouth race car. The honor is awarded in both Sportsman categories at all 24 NHRA national events.

### **Dodge Garage: New Digital Hub for Drag Racing News**

Fans now have a new one-stop destination for Mopar and Dodge drag racing news.

Dodge Garage (<http://www.dodgegarage.com>) is a digital content hub and premier destination for drag racing and muscle car enthusiasts.

Fans can view daily updates and get access to an online racing HQ, news, events, galleries, available downloads and merchandise. Dodge Garage features include exclusive content, such as a three-part video series "Chasing the Title," that offers fans a unique, behind-the-scenes glimpse at Pritchett and her DSR team in action.

For information on Mopar on and off the track, check out the Mopar brand's official blog, <http://blog.mopar.com>.

### **Up Next: NHRA Heartland Nationals**

After a string of three consecutive races, Mopar Dodge//SRT drivers will rest and recharge during a much-needed week off before heading to the next event, the NHRA Heartland Nationals, scheduled for May 18-20 at Heartland Motorsports Park in Topeka, Kansas. Last year at the event, Ron Capps took the Funny Car win in an all-Mopar Dodge//SRT final round battle with Matt Hagan.

### **2018 NHRA Championship — Point Standings After Round 7 of 24 (Season Wins in Parentheses)**

#### **NHRA Top Fuel**

1. Steve Torrence (3) –581

2. **Tony Schumacher, Mopar HEMI — 461**
3. Doug Kalitta (1) — 458
4. Clay Millican — 448
5. **Leah Pritchett, Mopar Dodge HEMI (1) — 435**
6. Antron Brown — 390
7. Brittany Force (1) — 375
8. Terry McMillen — 336
9. Richie Crampton (1) —280
10. Mike Salinas — 275

#### **NHRA Funny Car**

1. Courtney Force (2) — 546
2. **Jack Beckman, Dodge Charger R/T (1) — 538**
3. **Matt Hagan, Dodge Charger R/T (1) — 487**
4. **Tommy Johnson Jr., Dodge Charger R/T —436**
5. J.R. Todd (2) — 428
6. Robert Hight — 421
7. **Ron Capps, Dodge Charger R/T — 404**
8. Cruz Pedregon (1) — 357
9. Shawn Langdon — 301
10. Tim Wilkerson — 293

#### **About Dodge//SRT**

Dodge//SRT offers a complete lineup of performance vehicles that stand out in their own segments. Dodge is FCA North America's mainstream performance brand, and SRT is positioned as the ultimate performance halo of the Dodge brand, together creating a complete and balanced performance brand with one vision and one voice.

For more than 100 years, the Dodge brand has carried on the spirit of brothers John and Horace Dodge, who founded the company in 1914. Their influence continues today. New for 2018, the 840-horsepower Dodge Challenger SRT Demon, the fastest quarter-mile production car in the world and most powerful muscle car ever, is taking the world by storm, along with the new 2018 Dodge Durango SRT, America's fastest, most powerful and most capable three-row SUV, and the 707-horsepower Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat Widebody. These new SRT ultimate performance models join a brand lineup that includes the Durango, Grand Caravan, Journey, Charger and Challenger, including the 707-horsepower Challenger SRT Hellcat and the Charger SRT Hellcat, the quickest, fastest and most powerful sedan in the world.

#### **Mopar**

Mopar is the global name for Stellantis genuine parts and authentic accessories.

A simple combination of the words MOfor and PARTs, Mopar offers exceptional service, parts and customer-care. Born in 1937 as the name of a line of antifreeze products, Mopar has evolved over more than 85 years to represent both complete vehicle care and authentic performance for owners and enthusiasts worldwide.

Mopar made its mark in the 1960s during the muscle-car era with performance parts to enhance speed and handling for both on-road and racing use. Later, Mopar expanded to include technical service and customer support, and today integrates service, parts and customer-care operations in order to enhance customer and dealer support worldwide.

Complete information on Mopar is available at [www.mopar.com](http://www.mopar.com) and the Mopar blog at [www.blog.mopar.com](http://www.blog.mopar.com). For more information regarding Stellantis (NYSE: STLA), please visit [www.stellantis.com](http://www.stellantis.com).

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