

Pritchett Dominates NHRA Factory Stock Showdown Class at St. Louis, Powers Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak to Second Consecutive Win

- Leah Pritchett follows up first-ever run in seven-second range run during Factory Stock Showdown qualifying with event win at AAA Insurance NHRA Midwest Nationals
- Victory at Gateway Motorsports Park in Madison, Illinois, near St. Louis is second consecutive Factory Stock Showdown win for Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) driver Pritchett
- Win is fourth straight in Factory Stock Showdown for a Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak driver
- Pritchett also advances to semifinals in her Mopar Dodge Top Fuel dragster at St. Louis, remains fourth in the Countdown standings
- Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T driver Tommy Johnson Jr. leads Mopar-powered Funny Car drivers with semifinals showing
- McCormack, Lynch earn Stock and Super Stock Dodge Top Finisher honors, respectively
- Dodge Garage (<http://www.dodgegarage.com/>), a digital content hub for muscle car and race enthusiasts, features highlights from NHRA season

September 23, 2018, Auburn Hills, Mich. - Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak driver Leah Pritchett continued to own the Factory Stock Showdown class, celebrating her second consecutive event win one day after becoming first in the class to run in the seven-second range during the AAA Insurance NHRA Midwest Nationals at Gateway Motorsports Park near St. Louis.

The Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) driver made history during Factory Stock Showdown qualifying on Saturday at St. Louis, shrugging off a recent decision by the NHRA to effectively slap a 50-lb. weight handicap on all Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak vehicles to post a 7.936-second elapsed time (ET) and become the first NHRA driver in the class to make a hit in the seven-second range.

Despite owning a new entry in the NHRA record books, Pritchett would wrap up qualifying No. 2 after her DSR teammate Mark Pawuk ran even lower with a 7.929 ET to earn the pole. It marked the third consecutive event at which the Mopar brand's modern-day package car, the supercharged, 354-cubic-inch HEMI[®]-engine-powered Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak, earned the top two spots on the qualifying charts.

Pritchett, winner and No. 1 qualifier at the most recent NHRA Factory Stock Showdown event at the NHRA U.S. Nationals earlier this month, kept the seven-second train rolling with a 7.948 pass at 172.70 mph to defeat fellow Mopar Dodge Drag Pak driver and former NHRA Pro Stock racer Allen Johnson in the opening round. She used an 8.031/172.12 to send home Pete Gasko Jr. in the quarterfinals and then knocked out Arthur Kohn in the semifinals with an 8.011/171.88 run.

In the final, Pritchett nudged up near the seven-second range in an easy defeat of Stephen Bell, who knocked out her teammate Pawuk in round two, unleashing her Kevin Helms-tuned Drag Pak with a blistering 8.001/172.36 to claim victory after Bell experienced problems early. The win was the fourth consecutive in Factory Stock Showdown by a Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak driver, dating back to the NHRA Bristol event in June.

Pritchett also led the way for Mopar and Dodge//SRT drivers in the NHRA Nitro classes, pulling double duty and advancing to the semifinals in her Mopar Dodge Top Fuel dragster. She was on a solo run in round one when a broken throttle cable on her opponent Scott Palmer's machine ended his day before the run. Blake Alexander was the seven-time Top Fuel winner's next opponent. Pritchett had the starting line advantage and never trailed with her

run of 3.802 seconds at 322.73 mph. In the semifinals, Pritchett gave it her best effort to take down the points leader, Steve Torrence. She had a slight advantage at the start, but Torrence powered around her and took the win with his pass of 3.772 seconds compared to Pritchett's 3.809 E.T.

Make-A-Wish Foundation Dodge Charger R/T NHRA Funny Car driver Tommy Johnson, Jr. came to Gateway Motorsports Park seeking his first victory at the track where his father earned his only national event win. The fan-favorite qualified No. 4 and started eliminations against No. 13 Del Worsham with a perfect run straight down the groove for the win. Johnson came up against Bob Tasca III in the quarterfinals and recorded a textbook 3.950 run, quickest of the round, for the win. Johnson would come up short in the semifinals against No. 1 qualifier Robert Hight, his solid 4.008/320.13 pass not enough to beat Hight's 3.945/323.04 effort to the stripe. Johnson is sixth in the Countdown standings.

Tony Schumacher entered his 500th event with his sights set on advancing from second to the No. 1 spot in the Top Fuel points ranking. Schumacher qualified his Mopar-powered U.S. Army dragster sixth for race No. 2 of the Countdown to the Championship and drew non-Countdown contender Richie Crampton in round one. "The Sarge's" 11,000-horsepower machine lost traction near halftrack before giving way to an engine explosion, but Schumacher was able to hang on for the win against Crampton's tire smoking attempt. In round two, Schumacher had the starting line advantage but early tire smoke allowed his opponent Pat Dakin claim the upset win. Schumacher leaves St. Louis ranked third in the Top Fuel standings

Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car driver and No. 11 qualifier Matt Hagan faced No. 6 Tim Wilkerson in first-round eliminations at Gateway Motorsports Park. Hagan, a three-time runner-up at St. Louis, jumped to a small starting line advantage with a .070 reaction time to Wilkerson's slower .075, but was unable to hold the lead. Both drivers hazed the tires around the 300 ft. mark, but Hagan had to work overtime to keep his car away from first the wall and then the centerline, while Wilkerson was able to recover and collect the round win. Hagan, a two-time NHRA Funny Car world champion, exits St. Louis seventh in the Countdown quest.

Defending event champion Ron Capps returned to Gateway Motorsports Park in suburban St. Louis looking to add to his category-best four NHRA Midwest Nationals Funny Car titles. The Mopar-powered NAPA Dodge Charger R/T driver was nearly flawless in qualifying, making the second quickest run of each round, earning bonus points during all four sessions and claiming the second starting position on Sunday. Capps matched up in round one against 'Countdown spoiler' Cruz Pedregon and clicked off a solid 3.978 ET, but his opponent's starting line advantage was enough to put Pedregon over the top for the holeshot win. Capps is fifth in the Countdown rankings.

Two-time St. Louis winner (2012, 2016) Jack Beckman, driver of the Infinite Hero Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car, qualified in the top half of the field in the eighth position, drawing John Force in the opening round. "Fast" Jack trailed off the start but quickly put his Hellcat's nose out front and began to add to his lead before his momentum abruptly came to a halt around the 600-foot mark due to a broken blower drive shaft, allowing Force to drive around for the win. Beckman is now ninth in the standings.

Mopar Dodge//SRT NHRA Sportsman Spotlight

Jason McCormack of Columbiaville, Michigan, raced his 1966 A/S Plymouth Belvedere to a round-four finish and the Dodge Top Finisher trophy in Stock Eliminator during the seventh annual AAA Insurance NHRA Midwest Nationals. With an iconic 426 HEMI V8 engine under the hood, McCormack released the clutch pedal too early and red-light fouled his chances of advancing into the next round.

In Super Stock, Keith Lynch of New Hudson, Ohio, drove his 2010 FSS/K Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak to a second-round finish and Dodge Top Finisher honors. Powered by a Mopar 5.7-Liter HEMI, Lynch's Drag Pak looked to be a strong contender during race weekend but was sidelined early during eliminations.

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

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

Leah Pritchett, Mopar Dodge Top Fuel Dragster

(No. 5 Qualifier – 3.718 ET)

Rd.1: (.075-second reaction time, 5.568 seconds at 125.37 mph) beat No. 12 Scott Palmer (No Time)

Rd.2: (.076/3.802/322.73) beat No. 4 Blake Alexander (.082/8.032/80.82)

Rd.3: (.054/3.809/322.11) lost to No. 1 Steve Torrence (.059/3.772/325.22)

On her Factory Stock Showdown win:

“We carried that momentum from the U.S. Nationals really without a hiccup. We put it to it every single round and that’s extremely impressive and a testament to the durability of the race cars, the powerplant and the people that Schumacher has put in place to run this program. We are in a fantastic spot heading in, second place in the points. It’s like Christmas Eve going into the last races. I really wouldn’t want a different perspective. We have a little bit of freshening up to do but overall this has been an incredible weekend of just straight teamwork all the way around and the Mopar power just continues to show through and we continue to want to show up.”

On her Top Fuel semifinals appearance:

“Going to the semifinals in the Countdown against some of the stiffest competition is definitely nothing to hang our heads about. We weren’t the quickest or fastest this weekend, but we made great improvements. We made wholesale changes that we had to commit to, and there was no turning back. We nipped away at them, but it just wasn’t quite enough. The points are still tight, we still have a shot and this team errs to the side of positivity. We’ve got a couple of things in our back pocket that I can’t wait to try out at our next race. Overall, it was a successful weekend and we’re going to build on this.”

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

(No. 4 Qualifier – 3.896 ET)

Rd.1: (.064-second reaction time, 3.925 seconds at 325.22 mph) beat No. 13 Del Worsham(.100/4.003/321.50)

Rd.2: (.087/3.950/323.50) beat No. 5 Bob Tasca III (.073/9.014/82.83)

Rd.3: (.086/4.008/320.13) lost to No. 1 Robert Hight (.081/3.945/323.04)

“We had a really good car. We’re doing really well in the Countdown, it’s just that Robert Hight is becoming a real pain, but that’s a good motivator. I feel the four best cars in the Countdown were in the semis and I’m glad we’re one of them. We just need to pick it up one more notch and I think we’ll be the car to beat.”

Tony Schumacher, U.S. Army Top Fuel Dragster

(No. 6 Qualifier – 3.731 ET)

Rd.1: (.080-second reaction time, 4.067 seconds at 257.73 mph) beat No. 11 Richie Crampton (.071/5.641/115.95)

Rd.2: (.074/4.115/270.43) lost to No. 14 Pat Dakin (.082/3.946/286.13)

“I’ve been around for 500 races. I understand that you don’t make it to the finals every time like I did in my first race. If you would have asked me after my first race, I would have said, ‘Gee, this is easy. I always get to the final.’ But after doing it for a long, long time, you realize this is a competitive sport with some incredible teams. Today was simply proof of that. Pat Dakin beat me today. He competes in about 10 events a year and has a quality team. He brings good stuff and knows how to race a car. When you get beat by him, you don’t hang your head. We need to regroup. A car can’t win the race smoking the tires. That’s what we’ve done four out of the last six elimination rounds. We can make some rounds, but can’t get away with it that many times. We’ve got to come up with a different plan.”

Matt Hagan, Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car

(No. 11 Qualifier – 3.967 ET)

Rd.1: (.070-second reaction time, 4.585 seconds at 201.19 mph) lost to No. 6 Tom Wilkerson (.075/4.348/251.67)

“We’re going to test tomorrow and change some stuff up. We’ve been up against it a little bit with what we’ve been trying to do, so we’re going to make some different changes and start moving forward with some things. At the end of the day, this is the same group of guys that I won a championship with, I runner-uped with, and we’ve won a bunch of races with. It’s a fuel car, stuff changes, things happen, you make adjustments and you bounce back from adversity. Like Dickie said, we’re going to grab this thing by the horns and wrestle it to the ground and come out with the best opportunity and chance we can for the next four races to turn on win lights for our sponsors and obviously try to win so races and try to win this championship. It’s, not over. I’ve seen crazy, crazy stuff happen, but I’ve also seen stuff come together and click, and you’re like, ‘Wow! Where’s that been all season!’ I’m really looking forward to tomorrow and making some runs here, making some test hits and hopefully get a handle on this race car.”

Jack Beckman, Infinite Hero Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car

(No. 8 Qualifier – 3.929 ET)

Rd.1: (.077-second reaction time, 4.523 seconds at 185.28 mph) lost to John Force No. 9 (.041/4.025/322.96)

“Broken blower drive shaft. It’s the shaft behind the upper pulley that spins the rotors in the supercharger, and it snapped. Wow. We’re finding a lot of ways to lose right now and that’s the problem with the Countdown, you can’t have these stumbles. We had a wonderful first round car even when we were struggling in the middle part of the season, and now three first round losses in a row. Barring a miracle, we’re not going to be running for a championship, we’re going to be running for trophies at the next four races. We are going to stay and test tomorrow. This is devastating, there’s no way to spin this and say ‘gee we’re going to make the best of this.’ We’re going to do the best we can from here on out, but it’s a gut punch to get two first round losses to open up the Countdown. We’ll run our car tomorrow, we’ll try some things that we think might give us a benefit and now we’re in a situation where not only do we have to win the next couple of races, we have to rely on four or five other cars losing first or second round. It’s not impossible, but we’re going to just control our own destiny at this point.”

Ron Capps, NAPA Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car

(No. 2 Qualifier – 3.873 ET)

Rd.1: (.101-second reaction time, 3.978 seconds at 316.23 mph) lost to No. 15 (.067/3.992/317.05)

“We talked about these non-Countdown cars being dangerous. They have a lot to prove and nothing to lose. Cruz (Pedregon) has won two championships. I didn’t feel like I missed the light. Sometimes, as a driver, you feel like you didn’t hit the light as good as you normally do. I try to be consistent. The worst part is that it hurts so bad because we had the best car on the ground. We were so consistent and good in qualifying with (crew chief Rahn) Tobler and this NAPA AutoCare team. We still have four races left and it seems like there will be first round losses by a lot of the Countdown hitters. I feel like I let down this entire team and everyone at DSR, and on top of that, we have to sit for almost two weeks. I can’t wait to get into the car on Friday at Dallas (the next event). These guys are my brothers and they’ll lift my spirits up.”

Up Next: AAA Texas NHRA FallNationals

Following a week off, Mopar and the Dodge//SRT drivers and teams will be back on track October 4-7 for the AAA Texas NHRA FallNationals at the Texas Motorplex in Ennis, Texas. This will be the third of six races in the NHRA Countdown to Championship. Matt Hagan is a two-time Funny Car winner at the track (2010, 2016) and Tony Schumacher has collected a Wally five times (2004, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2014) at Texas Motorplex.

Dodge Garage: Digital Hub for Drag Racing News

Fans now have a 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 the “Chasing the Title” video series, which offers fans a unique, behind-the-scenes glimpse at DSR drivers and teams in action on and off the track.

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

2018 NHRA Championship — Point Standings After Round 20 of 24

(Season Wins in Parentheses)

NHRA Funny Car

1. Robert Hight — 2270
2. J.R. Todd — 2240
3. Courtney Force — 2200
4. Tim Wilkerson — 2196
- 5. Ron Capps, Dodge Charger R/T (2) — 2182**
- 6. Tommy Johnson Jr., Dodge Charger R/T — 2166**
- 7. Matt Hagan, Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat (3) — 2144**
8. John Force — 2116
- 9. Jack Beckman, Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat (2) — 2113**
10. Shawn Langdon — 2086

NHRA Top Fuel

1. Steve Torrence — 2346
2. Clay Millican — 2276
- 3. Tony Schumacher, Mopar Dodge HEMI (1) — 2225**
- 4. Leah Pritchett, Mopar Dodge HEMI (2) — 2192**
5. Antron Brown — 2169
6. Doug Kalitta — 2135
7. Mike Salinas — 2119
8. Terry McMillen — 2093
9. Scott Palmer — 2085
10. Brittany Force — 2085

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For more than 100 years, the Dodge brand has carried on the spirit of brothers John and Horace Dodge, who founded the brand in 1914. Their influence continues today. New for 2019, the Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat Redeye is possessed by the Demon. Its 797-horsepower supercharged HEMI® high-output engine makes it the most powerful, quickest and fastest muscle car reaching 0-60 miles per hour (mph) in 3.4 seconds and the fastest GT production car with a ¼-mile elapsed time (ET) of 10.8 seconds at 131 mph. It also reaches a new top speed of 203 mph. Joining the Challenger SRT Hellcat Redeye is the 2019 Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat with its more powerful 717-horsepower engine, the Challenger R/T Scat Pack Widebody, which features fender flares from the SRT Hellcat Widebody and adds 3.5 inches of width to Scat Pack's footprint, as well as and the new Challenger R/T Scat Pack 1320. Infused with exclusive drag strip technology from the iconic Dodge Challenger SRT Demon, the Challenger R/T Scat Pack 1320 is a drag-oriented, street-legal muscle car and a blank canvas for the serious grassroots drag racer. The 2019 Dodge Durango SRT, America's fastest, most powerful and most capable three-row SUV with a best-in-class tow rating of 8,700 lbs. fills out the brands' performance lineup. These visceral performance models join a 2019 brand lineup that includes the Durango, Grand Caravan, Journey, Charger and Challenger — a showroom that offers performance at every price point.

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.

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