

Contact: Pat Caporali

Dan Reid

## **Mopar and Dodge//SRT Ready to Hit Throttle on 2021 NHRA Season; Action Starts This Weekend at Gatornationals in Florida**

- Mopar and Dodge//SRT ready for National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) 70th anniversary season set to launch at the 52nd annual Gatornationals at Gainesville Raceway in Florida on March 12-14
- Defending Funny Car World Championship winner Matt Hagan looks to defend his title aboard the Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye for Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) as Mopar and Dodge//SRT extend partnership with winningest organization in NHRA history for 19th consecutive season
- Relationship with DSR formally began in 2003 and has yielded 13 NHRA World Championships and 278 event wins across four different categories
- DSR swept all 11 Funny Car national event titles in 2020 and will start 2021 looking to add to its record-total of 14 consecutive Funny Car wins that date back to October 2019
- Leah Pruett ready to battle for wins and a championship in her DSR Top Fuel dragster with Mopar Dodge//SRT primary branding
- Pruett will also debut the new 2021 Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak this weekend at the Gatornationals in the first of the eight-race series NHRA Factory Stock Showdown series

March 10, 2021, Auburn Hills, Mich. - The Mopar and Dodge//SRT (Street and Racing Technology) performance brands are ready to race into the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Drag Racing Series' 70th anniversary season as the defending 2020 Funny Car World Champions. The NHRA kicks off their 22-national event schedule this weekend with the 52nd annual Gatornationals at historic Gainesville Raceway in Florida on March 12-14.

The Mopar and Dodge//SRT partnership wrapped up the previous NHRA season by earning a third Funny Car crown with Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) driver Matt Hagan (2011, 2014, 2020) aboard the Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye. It was also their sixth Funny Car world championship title with previous wins by Gary Scelzi (2005), Jack Beckman (2012), and Ron Capps (2016) since officially partnering with DSR in 2003.

As part of the preparations for the 2021 season with the winningest team in the NHRA series history, Mopar and Dodge//SRT have also extended the partnership with DSR for a 19th consecutive season, building on a relationship that began with Don Schumacher as a driver in 1971 before it was formalized with his team in 2003. Together they have earned 13 championships and 278 event wins in four different categories (161 Funny Car, 111 Top Fuel, three Pro Stock and three Factory Super Stock) of the DSR organization's 358 overall victories and 18 championships, and have reset countless track and national records.

In 2020, a dominant season-long performance by DSR Funny Car drivers Jack Beckman, Tommy Johnson Jr., Matt Hagan and Ron Capps saw the quartet combine to win all 11 national event Wally trophies and string together a record-total 14-race undefeated streak that dates back to October 2019.

This year's DSR driver lineup will battle for national event wins and world championships with Hagan (Funny Car) and Leah Pruett (Top Fuel and Factory Stock Showdown) once again carrying primary Mopar and Dodge//SRT branding, while Capps (Funny Car) will do battle aboard his Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye.

Mopar and Dodge//SRT will also debut the much anticipated fourth-generation 2021 Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak this weekend at the Gatornats in the Sportsman class' Factory Stock Showdown (FSS) series. Pruett will once again pull double duty at eight national race events this season as she gets behind the wheel of the new Drag Pak between rounds in her nitro-fueled Top Fuel dragster. She'll compete alongside her teammate Mark Pawuk as they

both compete aboard DSR-prepared HEMI-powered entries.

Mopar and Dodge//SRT will have their 4,800-square-foot exhibit at Gainesville Raceway this weekend in the NHRA's Manufacturers Midway. Among the display's interactive features are Dodge Challenger SRT Demon simulators for competitive NHRA fans to virtually race themselves, as well as the opportunity to see and feel the experience of drag racing from the driver's seat aboard an actual Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye Funny Car simulator.

Fans can tune in to the NHRA Camping World Drag Racing Series season-opening Gatornationals event beginning March 10-11 with a free livestream of testing on NHRA.TV. Television coverage returns to FOX all weekend long starting on Saturday, March 13, as FS1 broadcasts two hours of qualifying highlights beginning at 3 p.m. Eastern. Sunday morning's one hour FS1 qualifying show will air March 14 at 11 a.m., while the live three-hour final eliminations show launches at noon Eastern on the national FOX Broadcast Network.

#### **Matt Hagan, Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye Funny Car**

Hagan's 10,000-horsepower Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye will be tuned once again by longtime crew chief Dickie Venables. The three-time Funny Car World Champion is hoping to be able to add to his 36 career victories that have him tied for fifth-place on the Funny Car all-time win list. He is looking to win his first Wally trophy at the Gatornationals this weekend.

"Winning the 2020 Funny Car championship for Don Schumacher Racing was incredible and I'm proud to have carried the banner for Mopar Dodge//SRT for 13 years and three championships together. To have the support that Mopar and Dodge//SRT offers as far as parts performance and all they do with the Dodge Charger Funny Car bodies, the wind tunnel testing and everything else, means a lot. It's not just me and the race car driving down the racetrack. It's all the engineers and mechanics and all the folks that put in the time behind the scenes to put us in a championship caliber car and then go out there and compete at that highest level to make it happen.

"There are some tracks and some races that I haven't won at yet and one that really sticks out in my mind is Gainesville. I've been to the finals there but you still can't just show up and expect to win. You have to have a plan of action to do that and with it being our kickoff race this year, I really want to win the Gatornationals. It's very important to me to reinforce our championship and get a new year started the right way. I'm a hundred percent motivated to win that race. It's also so close to home for me that I have a lot of people there to support the effort. I've been there, I've tasted it, but I just come up short. Another event I'd like to win this year is the Dodge//SRT Mile-High Nationals at Bandimere Speedway in Denver. It's our sponsor's race and such a hard race to have success because it's a completely different tune up, different altitude and different setups."

#### **Leah Pruett, Mopar Dodge//SRT Top Fuel Dragster**

Pruett finished the 2020 season fourth in the Top Fuel standings for a third consecutive year. She has eight national race event wins, 16 final round appearances, and 12 No. 1 qualifier positions. She is looking to break into the top three this season with crew chiefs Todd Okuhara and Neal Strausbaugh.

"I couldn't be more thrilled about entering my sixth season with crew chief Todd Okuhara, and a third season with Neal Strausbaugh. This duo is one that has been magic in the making, and one that makes me proud to drive their dragster. The majority of our team has remained intact with a few new faces coming in on the crew, one of which was an intern we had a couple of years ago. There is often a lot of movement in the professional drag racing industry as it provides a lot of opportunities, so for us to remain intact and continue to build with confidence and enthusiasm is important, as that is how you build a winning team."

"I always have goals to win races and a championship. However, going winless in 2020 has made me set more specific incremental goals. I intend to win at least three national events this season. You can't do that without being great and consistent. If we can win three, we are in a good spot for intense momentum, which leads to advancement on the field, which is an intricate variable into winning a championship. Call it a goal, or bucket list, or dedication to whatever it will take this season, my goal is to win both a Top Fuel and Factory Stock Showdown National event title on the same day. We have eight opportunities to do so this year, and my intention after four years of perfecting the craft of competing in both, is to solidify this goal."

#### **Leah Pruett, Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak**

This is the fourth year that Pruett will compete in Factory Stock Showdown behind the wheel of a Dodge Challenger

Mopar Drag Pak. Pruett captured the 2018 FSS championship in her first full season with three wins and drove to the first official 7-second run aboard the third-generation Dodge Challenger Drag Pak. She posted her career-best elapsed time of 7.852 seconds at Gainesville in 2019. She will debut the new 2021 Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak this weekend.

"I was part of the development team and worked closely with Dodge//SRT engineers. We're very excited to start the Factory Stock Showdown season with the new generation Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak after challenges last season delayed the debut. We just took delivery of the new Drag Pak, and we are still getting acquainted and comfortable with the all-new car. It is showing promise but we've only been able to test with it one time before competition, so we have to practice expectation management and understand we are still in our own development stage with the car. It looks fantastic and I'm very proud to be able to continue to help improve the performance throughout the season."

#### **Ron Capps, NAPA Auto Parts Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car**

Kicking-off his 27th season in the NHRA, Capps will be back aboard his DSR HEMI-powered Funny Car prepared by crew chiefs Dean 'Guido' Antonelli and John Medlen. Capps is the defending Funny Car winner at (NHRA) Gatornationals and finished fourth in the standings last year battling against his teammate, Hagan, until the very last round of the season.

"We talk about trying to get back to normal, but as far as normal goes, the start of this season feels anything but. We're going to kick off our season in Gainesville as opposed to Pomona, California, and that's something that's never happened. As for me, I'm starting 2021 with a brand-new team from top-to-bottom. I have Guido (Dean Antonelli), and John Medlen calling the shots, and they brought their entire crew with them. I've known Guido a long time, since we both started working on fuel cars, and it's been great to be reunited with him as a crew chief and me as a driver. John Medlen, I just can't say enough about him, I got to work with him as my crew chief years ago. We won Sonoma together back in 2010; it was a very emotional win. I met my new crew for the first time a couple of weeks ago when I visited the shop to get fitted for the car, and then I got to spend more time with them in pre-season testing. There have been a lot of different things for me to get used to, but the success that Guido and Medlen has speaks for itself. I told them I wanted to adapt to what they do in the race car, and not the other way around so it's been a challenge for me, but I'm always up for a challenge. We had a great test session down in West Palm. Within four runs we ran a 3.94, a 3.93, and two times we ran 3.89 so it was a great few days.

"I'm looking forward to Gainesville. The Gatornationals is always a huge race, and this year is much bigger than it's ever been since we're starting the season there. I'm proud to represent NAPA AUTO PARTS again this year, and I'm thrilled to welcome a new partner, GEARWRENCH. We're heading into the Gatornationals as the defending champions, and I'd like nothing better than to go back-to-back."

#### **Mark Pawuk, Empaco Equipment Mopar Drag Pak**

Pawuk battled atop the FSS standings throughout 2020, finishing third overall in his Empaco Equipment Mopar Drag Pak. He has three final round appearances and two No. 1 qualifier positions to which he would like to add more to this season.

"I always look forward to the Gatornationals. From my early days of running Super Gas in the 1980s to switching over to Pro Stock in the late 80s. It has always been one of my favorite races to go to. I'm looking forward to getting out of the cold northern Ohio weather and heading south, but I'm especially looking forward to Dodge's debut of the new 2021 Drag Pak. It will allow our Empaco Equipment Dodge Challenger to run the 2021 engine package that comes in the '21 Drag Pak. It should help us be more competitive in hot weather conditions. Gainesville looks like it'll be in the low-to-mid 80s and should be a beautiful weekend. We did some testing last weekend and we were competitive with the other manufacturers. We are gaining ground, and I'm really excited about the 2021 season. I'm hoping to be in the new Dodge Drag Pak later this season, and I'm excited to see what Leah Pruett can do this weekend in her new car. I'm proud to once again have the support of Empaco Equipment, Mr. Heater, Ohio CAT, and Ohio Peterbilt."

#### **Mopar**

Mopar (a simple contraction of the words MOtor and PARts) offers exceptional service, parts and customer-care. Born in 1937 as the name of a line of antifreeze products, the Mopar brand has evolved over more than 80 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, the brand expanded to include technical service and customer support. Today, Mopar integrates service, parts and customer-care operations in order to enhance customer and dealer support worldwide.

Complete information on the Mopar brand is available at [www.mopar.com](http://www.mopar.com). Mopar is part of the portfolio of brands offered by leading global automaker and mobility provider Stellantis. For more information regarding Stellantis (NYSE: STLA), please visit [www.stellantis.com](http://www.stellantis.com).

### **Dodge//SRT**

For more than 100 years, the Dodge brand has carried on the spirit of brothers John and Horace Dodge. Their influence continues today as Dodge shifts into high gear with muscle cars and SUVs that deliver unrivaled performance in each of the segments where they compete.

2021 marks the year that Dodge is distilled into a pure performance brand, offering Hellcat-powered, 700-plus-horsepower SRT versions of every model across the lineup. For the 2021 model year, Dodge delivers the drag-strip dominating 807-horsepower Dodge Challenger SRT Super Stock, the new 797-horsepower Dodge Charger SRT Redeye, the most powerful and fastest mass-produced sedan in the world, and the new 710-horsepower Dodge Durango SRT Hellcat, the most powerful SUV ever. Combined, these three muscle cars make Dodge the industry's most powerful brand, offering more horsepower than any other American brand across its entire lineup.

In 2020, Dodge was named the "#1 Brand in Initial Quality," making it the first domestic brand ever to rank No. 1 in the J.D. Power Initial Quality Study (IQS). The Dodge brand also ranked No. 1 in the J.D. Power APEAL Study (mass market). These results are historic because it marks the first time a domestic brand has earned top spots in both J.D. Power studies in the same year.

Dodge is part of the portfolio of brands offered by leading global automaker and mobility provider Stellantis. For more information regarding Stellantis (NYSE: STLA), please visit [www.stellantis.com](http://www.stellantis.com).

### **DodgeGarage: Digital Hub for Drag Racing News**

Fans can follow all the NHRA's action this season at DodgeGarage, the one-stop portal for Dodge//SRT and Mopar drag-racing news. The site includes daily updates and access to an online racing HQ, news, events, galleries, available downloads, and merchandise. For more information, visit [www.dodgegarage.com](http://www.dodgegarage.com).

### **@DodgeMoparMotorsports on Instagram**

The [@DodgeMoparMotorsports](https://www.instagram.com/dodge_mopar_motorsports) Instagram channel continues to share content capturing Dodge//SRT Mopar drivers on the track. Fans can see action from the NHRA Camping World Drag Racing Series and NHRA Sportsman grassroots racers competing in classes such as Factory Stock Showdown, Stock and Super Stock, as well as additional motorsports series.

-###-

Additional information and news from Stellantis are available at: <https://media.stellantisnorthamerica.com>