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Capps Drives Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat to No. 1 Qualifier Position at Season-opener NHRA Gatornationals

- Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) driver Ron Capps drove his Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car to the No. 1 qualifier position at the 52nd annual National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Gatornationals at historic Gainesville Raceway
- Matt Hagan begins his defense of the Funny Car world championship as the eighth seed aboard his DSR Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye
- DSR Top Fuel driver Leah Pruett wheels Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye dragster to third-seeded position on the elimination ladder
- Much-anticipated debut of new generation Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak saw Leah Pruett post a solid 7.892-second run at 173.49 mph in qualifying
- Mopar-powered Drag Paks of Mark Pawuk and Pruett qualify 11th and 13th respectively for Sunday's elimination rounds of Factory Stock Showdown

March 13, 2021, Gainesville, Fla. - The 2021 National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Drag Racing series season got off to a fast start for Mopar and Dodge//SRT performance brands as Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) veteran driver Ron Capps drove his Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car to the top-seeded position for Sunday's 52nd annual National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Gatornationals at historic Gainesville Raceway.

After finishing fourth in the closely contested 2020 Funny Car championship that went right down to the wire, Capps kicked off the season-opening weekend the way he ended 2020 at the Dodge NHRA finals in Las Vegas -- as No. 1 qualifier going into race day. Coming into the Gatornationals as a three-time and defending Funny Car winner, Capps took his HEMI®-powered DSR Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat to the top of the timing sheets in Friday qualifying with a 3.895-second run at 329.02 mph to give him the provisional lead position on the eliminations ladder. While Capps also ran the quickest lap in the second qualifying session, neither he nor anyone else was able to better his Q1 time in any of the sessions, giving him his 26th career No. 1 qualifier position. He'll see No. 16 seed Jim Campbell as his first round opponent on Sunday morning.

2020 NHRA Funny Car World Champion Matt Hagan will take his "Demon-possessed" DSR Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye into race day as the eighth seed after a best qualifying lap of 3.981 seconds at 324.59 mph in the second session where he posted the third quickest time. He'll start his world championship defense and work to make his way through eliminations in the hopes of earning his first Gatornationals title win by facing No. 9 seed Bob Tasca as his first elimination round opponent of the year.

Battling in the Top Fuel top-three through most of the 2020 season and closing out the year fourth in the championship has DSR's Leah Pruett motivated to get this new season off to a flying start and looking to score her first Gatornationals event win. In qualifying, Pruett took her red, black and chrome Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye dragster for a 3.741-second/ 326.32-mph pass in her final run to move her up to the third-seeded position on the eliminations ladder and grant her lane choice against Mike Bucher in the first round.

In the NHRA Sportsman class, the fourth-generation 2021 Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak made its much-anticipated official on track debut in the Factory Stock Showdown (FSS) series on Friday. Leah Pruett wheeled her white and blue new generation Drag Pak to a solid first qualifying run with a 7.966-second pass at 175.09 mph to post the sixth quickest pass against a 29-car field in provisional qualifying. On Saturday, she improved on that performance with a 7.892-second/173.49-mph run to put her 13th overall and set up an opening round match-up

against No. 4 seed John Cerbone.

Teammate Mark Pawuk steadily improved his DSR-prepared Empaco Equipment Mopar Drag Pak through qualifying as well and posted his best time on his final run late Saturday night with a 7.873 second/174.12-mph pass to earn his 11-seed position on the FSS eliminations ladder. He'll line up next to Jim Betz for the opening round on Sunday morning.

Television coverage of the NHRA Camping World Drag Racing Series season-opening event, the Amalie Motor Oil NHRA Gatornationals, begins Sunday morning, March 14, with a one-hour FS1 qualifying show at 11 a.m. Eastern, while the three-hour eliminations show, including live coverage of the final round, launches at noon on the national FOX Broadcast Network.

ADDITIONAL NOTES and QUOTES:

Matt Hagan, Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye Funny Car

(No. 8 Qualifier – 3.975 seconds at 321.35 mph)

Qualifying 1: 4.308 sec./ 209.62 mph (10th)

Qualifying 2: 3.981 sec./ 324.59 mph (1 bonus point for 3rd quickest of session)

Qualifying 3: 3.974 sec./ 325.30 mph (4th)

"Race day is everything. Driving this Dodge SRT Hellcat Redeye Funny Car into race day and hopefully carrying on that championship momentum into tomorrow. At the end of the day, we've got Dickie Venables in our corner and that's all that really matters. I'm confident in the team and confident in the car."

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

(No. 1 Qualifier – 3.895 seconds at 329.02 mph)

Qualifying 1: 3.895 sec./ 329.02 mph (3 bonus points for quickest run of session)

Qualifying 2: 3.948 sec./ 320.66 mph (3 bonus points for quickest of session)

Qualifying 3: 4.802 sec./ 163.65 mph (12th)

"We all know how good this car is and with (crew chiefs) Guido (Dean Antonelli) and (John) Medlen and how good a team they've made and really all these guys and gals with Jessica (Vejar) on our team. It's a lot of fun to see this car do well and how happy everybody is in the NAPA camp. I just want to come in and try to blend in and be the best I can and not mess up. I want to help show how good a team this is. We did get after it on that last run. Guido was trying to run a mid-80, so those conditions we won't see tomorrow. Sunday morning, if you're a fan, don't be late at 10 a.m. First round will be prime conditions. Just a great job for NAPA and Gearwrench and we got the first yellow No. 1 Camping World hat and it matches this NAPA uniform with the yellow and blue and we're hoping for a blue race win hat tomorrow."

Leah Pruett, Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye Top Fuel Dragster

(No. 3 Qualifier – 3.741 seconds at 326.32 mph)

Qualifying 1: 6.567 sec./ 94.57 mph (17th)

Qualifying 2: 3.863 sec./ 314.53 mph (9th)

Qualifying 3: 3.741 sec. / 326.32 mph (1 bonus points for 3rd quickest of session)

"It's amazing how one small tire shake situation very much humbles us. We didn't get the start to the event that we wanted but we immediately bounced back. We had a strategy in Q2 to lay down a very solid, honest pass so that we could pick away at it in Q3 and that's exactly what we did. I'm so proud of this team and the authority that they're taking. The car is reacting well; I'm driving well. Our test before this went great. Qualifying third in our HEMI dragster at this first event is fantastic. As I've said before, it doesn't matter who we line up with, it's just about taking it one round at a time. So far, things are working in unison and we look forward to keeping it working that way, just as our Pennzoil oil keeps us running smoothly."

Leah Pruett, Mopar Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak – Factory Stock Shootout

(No. 13 Qualifier – 7.892 seconds at 173.49 mph)

Qualifying 1: 7.966 sec./ 175.09 mph (6th)

Qualifying 2: 7.892 sec./ 173.49 mph (8th)

Qualifying 3: 9.849 sec./ 129.57 mph

"I think it's fair to say that our Dodge DSR team performed to its maximum of capabilities to get the car into competitive form with just a limited number of days with it before entering actual competition. We are definitely in the right direction. With the limited number of runs that we have had with it to really understand and get to know this car, where we're at has been in the positive progress domain. I wouldn't call it a conservative run out of the gate. It was more of a run to identify a baseline for this car, which we really didn't have before, so we're really tackling multiple things at one time. Qualifying with a 7.89 was fantastic. We thought we'd whip it up for final session but unfortunately lots of different factors played into the night. Running at 10 p.m. with an untouched starting line in over an hour really did not work in anyone's favor. But that doesn't deter any of our focus and confidence. For tomorrow we know we're going to be one of the first classes out. It's going to be cool (temperatures). We have the power for it. We're going to take as much knowledge of this car as we know to get it deep into the rounds."

Mark Pawuk, Empaco Equipment Mopar Drag Pak – Factory Stock Shootout

(No. 11 Qualifier – 7.873 seconds at 174.12 mph)

Qualifying 1: 8.008 sec./ 172.81 mph (8th)

Qualifying 2: 7.934 sec / 172.65 mph (11th)

Qualifying 3: 7.873 sec. / 174.12 mph (11th)

"I was glad to get my Empaco Equipment, Ohio CAT, Mr. Heater Dodge Drag Pak down the race track. It got real cold and real tough out there. We were supposed to run at 3 p.m. and running after 10 at night gave us a little bit different of conditions. Too bad Leah (Pruett) didn't get down but I think we made great progress with the new 2021 Drag Pak at the first race out. She ran very well and unfortunately she would've been up quite a bit higher if she made it down tonight because the air conditions were so much better than they were the rest of the weekend, but we're going to hang in there and do the best we can tomorrow and keep our Dodges moving forward."

NHRA Championship Points Standings:

Following qualifying at Amalie Motor Oil NHRA Gatornationals

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. Ron Capps (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 44

2. Alexis DeJoria – 40

3. Tim Wilkerson – 37

4. John Force – 36

5. Robert Hight – 35

6. Matt Hagan (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 34

6. J.R. Todd – 34

8. Cruz Pedregon – 33

9. Blake Alexander – 32

9. Chad Green – 32

9. Paul Lee – 32

9. Bob Tasca III – 32

TOP FUEL (season wins in parentheses)

1. Steve Torrance – 44

2. Billy Torrence – 42

3. Leah Pruett (Mopar Dodge/SRT) – 37

4. Brittany Force – 35

5. Doug Kalitta – 34

5. Shawn Langdon – 34

5. Mike Salinas – 34

8. Josh Hart – 33

9. Justin Ashley – 32

9. Antron Brown – 32

9. Doug Foley – 32

9. Clay Millican – 32

Mopar

Mopar (a simple contraction of the words MOTO 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. 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.

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.

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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.

@DodgeMoparMotorsports on Instagram

The @DodgeMoparMotorsports 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.

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