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Runner-up Finish at 67th Annual Dodge//SRT U.S. Nationals Puts Capps and Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat No. 1 to Kick-off NHRA 'Countdown to the Championship'

- Ron Capps powered his Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car from the No. 6 seeded position to a runner-up finish at the National Hot Rod Association's (NHRA) 67th annual Dodge//SRT U.S. Nationals at Lucas Oil Raceway in Indianapolis
- Capps' final round appearance at the "Big Go" propelled him from a fifth place position in the Funny Car standings at the beginning weekend to close out the regular season as No. 1
- Cruz Pedregon drove his Snap-On Tools Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat from the No. 4 qualifying position to his fourth semifinal finish of the year
- Leah Pruett qualified her Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) Dodge//SRT Redeye dragster fourth for Top Fuel eliminations and drove to a quarterfinal appearance
- Pruett also drove her 2021 Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak to the quarterfinal result in Constant Aviation Factory Stock showdown
- Mark Pawuk debuted his 2021 Mopar Drag Pak in Factory Stock Showdown this weekend by recording his career best speed at 177.32 mph in the opening round

September 5, 2021, Indianapolis, IN - The National Hot Rod Association's (NHRA) cornerstone event and world's biggest drag-racing competition, held each year at Lucas Oil Raceway in Indianapolis and affectionately referred to as the "Big Go," owes much of its prestige and earned renown to its history and reputation for offering up memorable racing, cutthroat competition, formidable challenges and drama; the 67th annual Dodge//SRT U.S. Nationals did not disappoint.

Don Schumacher Racing Funny Car driver Ron Capps powered his Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat from the No. 6 qualifier position, to a trio of 3.9-second passes to defeat Justin Schriefer, Robert Hight, and Alexis DeJoria, and advanced to only his second final elimination round appearance at the fabled event for the opportunity to vie for the elusive Dodge//SRT U.S. Nationals Wally trophy he has chased for 27 years.

The final set up a duel between Capps and fellow Funny Car veteran Tim Wilkerson in which the DSR HEMI®-powered machine made the first move on its way to laying down another solid sub-four second pass. His opponent, however, was able to match the effort and pull ahead for the win.

While Capps' runner-up finish at the "Big Go" wasn't the ending he had hoped for, as a consolation prize the result propelled him from a fifth place position in the Funny Car points standings at the beginning weekend, to close out the NHRA's regular season in the top spot. The top ten qualifiers for the upcoming seven-event playoff series now see their points reset, and as the No. 1 seed, Capps is rewarded with a 20-point lead to begin the "Countdown to the Championship" at next weekend's Mopar Express Lane Nationals Presented by Pennzoil at Maple Grove Raceway.

Another positive performance by the Cruz Pedregon Racing team began with the Snap-on Tools Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat qualifying fourth on the strength of the sole qualifying run of the weekend after two Saturday sessions were rained out. Cruz Pedregon, a three-time winner at Indy, drove straight down the lane with a pair of 3.92-second runs to dispatch Terry Haddock and J.R. Todd, and then advanced to his third consecutive semifinal showdown to face-off against the eventual event winner, Wilkerson.

The third Dodge and Mopar brand-supported Funny Car of Matt Hagan was sidelined for this weekend's competition. After the defending NHRA world champion driver withdrew from competition after testing positive for COVID-19 and

driving duties were entrusted to Tommy Johnson Jr., efforts to qualify the Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye entry were thwarted by a mechanical issue and rain, resulting in a DNS (Did not start). As a result, no points were awarded and Hagan slipped from leading the category to starting the playoffs from sixth place in the Funny Car championship standings.

In Top Fuel competition, last year's runner-up finisher Leah Pruett was looking to take her Dodge//SRT Redeye dragster for another run for the prestigious Indy title. From the fifth spot on the eliminations ladder she began her drive with an opening round win over No. 13 seed Joe Morrison.

In the quarterfinals, Pruett knew she was up against tricky track conditions in the right lane and made sure she gave herself every advantage. She launched with a near-perfect reaction time, clocking a 0.002-second light, but the track showed no mercy and slowed Pruett's progress, enabling rival Josh Hart to catch and pass her to score the win. With the result, Pruett clinched the No. 4 spot to start her fourth "Countdown to the Championship" playoff run.

While her participation in Top Fuel was done for the day, Pruett still had another chance to take home a Wally trophy, this time in the Sportsman category. A competitive field of 23 entries hit the staging lanes for the Constant Aviation Factory Stock Showdown (FSS) eliminations at the "Big Go" and among them, as the top HEMI®-powered entry, was Pruett who qualified her 2021 Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak in the No. 12 spot on the basis of her single Friday evening pass at 7.965 seconds/ 166.70 mph after rain washed out any chance of getting in another run on Saturday. Despite the lack of track time, Pruett went into the opening round with the confidence of having earned two runner-up finishes at the last two events at Denver and Topeka.

Her first pairing was with DSR stablemate and No. 13 qualifier David Davies who was making his U.S. Nationals debut aboard his 20201 D H Davies Racing Mopar Drag Pak. Pruett took the early lead with a quick 0.060-second reaction time to her teammate's 0.095, and turned on the win lights with a 7.953 second pass at 176.93 mph to edge Davies' equally solid 7.959 sec./175.89 mph effort.

That set up a second round battle for Pruett against No. 1 qualifier Joseph Welsh, who had had the advantage of registering a second qualifying run to earn the top seeding before rain ended everyone else's opportunity to fine tune their car. While Pruett powered her Mopar Drag Pak to another solid and consistent 7.958 sec./176.07 mph run, her opponent took advantage of a quicker start and a 7.831/177.65 pass to end her hopes of advancing any further.

The third DSR FSS driver Mark Pawuk debuted his brand-new 2021 Empaco Equipment Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak by recording a blistering career-best 177.32 mph run in the opening round of eliminations with a quick 7.973-second pass. Unfortunately, Pawuk performance was overshadowed by that of No. 3 seed and eventual event title winner Jesse Alexander, who's 0.025-second reaction time paired with a 7.924 sec./170.36 mph pass ended his day.

The NHRA's "Countdown to the Championship" seven-event playoff series begins with next weekend's Mopar Express Lane Nationals Presented by Pennzoil at Maple Grove Raceway near Reading, Pennsylvania on Sept.12-14, 2021.

ADDITIONAL NOTES and QUOTES

FUNNY CAR:

Matt Hagan, DSR Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye

(Did Not Start)

Ron Capps, DSR NAPA AUTO PARTS Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat

(No. 6 Qualifier – 3.907 seconds at 326.08 mph)

Round 1: (0.053-second reaction time, 3.903 seconds at 325.77 mph) versus No. 11 Justin Schriefer (0.083/6.496/102.64)

Round 2: (0.077/3.952/326.79) defeats No. 3 Robert Hight (0.056/12.125/75.88)

Round 3: (0.091/3.909/327.74) defeats No. 7 Alexis DeJoria (0.077/3.992/323.04)

Round 4: (0.075/3.946/326.63) loss to No. 8 Tim Wilkerson (0.088/3.912/320.36)

"First and foremost, our thoughts are with Matt Hagan and his health is on everyone's mind here. That's a great race car with Dickie Venables and Hagan and you expect to go through that Dodge to win a race and a championship. It's weird not having them in the show today. We have these small goals we set and one of those was to be the regular season points leader. Coming in here there were a lot of drivers with the chance to grab that top spot, it was pretty bunched up and exciting for the fans. Things fell our way today.

"We had some tough matchups with Robert Hight in the second round and Alexis (DeJoria) in the finals. And Tim Wilkerson in the final round. That final round is exactly why we race on the track and not on paper. I learned a long time ago not to expect a win. I don't care how good your car is running. Tim is a great example. You don't know what he's going to do. We both went up, and talked before the run and we were going to throw down. He outran us. It stings. Hats off to them. They threw down that 0.91 in a lane nobody thought could run that time. Give them credit."

Cruz Pedregon, Cruz Pedregon Racing Snap-on® Tools Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat

(No. 4 Qualifier – 3.896 seconds at 323.66 mph)

Round 1: (0.080-second reaction time, 3.929 seconds at 323.66 mph) defeats No. 13 Terry Haddock (0.111/13.081/69.63)

Round 2: (0.132/3.920/324.20) defeats No. 5 J.R. Todd (0.059/4.328/224.36)

Round 3: (0.068/8.704/87.34) loss to No. 8 Tim Wilkerson (0.089/3.984/325.37)

"A semifinal finish after qualifying in the fourth position is a great day. We ran a 3.92 in both the first and second round. In the semifinal, the track had warmed up a bit so we ended up spinning the tires against eventual event winner Tim Wilkerson. Overall, we look back at it and think it's the biggest race of the year and anytime you can get to the final four at an event like this, is really a credit to the team and their hard work. It was one of those races where we were on pace to mow them down and win the whole thing, but the track conditions deteriorated as it got warmer, and that was the end of our event there.

"As we look ahead and look at the countdown, I congratulated the team, everybody that did a great job to get ourselves into the countdown. We'll start the playoffs eighth and we're all going to be positioned with ten points separating each position from second place through the tenth, so it's just a matter of how you do in these last seven events. We're excited and optimistic that we're going to have a car to beat. The Snap-on tools Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat has been really on a roll lately. The fact that we've been in the semis or better in the last three events in a row (with a runner-up finish at Brainerd) really bodes well for our team and our confidence."

TOP FUEL:

Leah Pruett, DSR Dodge//SRT Redeye Dragster

(No. 5 Qualifier – 3.755 seconds at 322.88 mph)

Round 1: (0.077-second reaction time, 3.933 seconds at 252.37 mph) defeats No. 12 Joe Morrison (0.071/4.331/224.36)

Round 2: (0.002/3.897/318.84) loss to No. Josh Hart (0.057/3.790/325.37)

"The U.S. Nationals is normally the biggest marathon of a race as we usually test right before it, take part in a number of events, and have five qualifying sessions and then race on Monday. It's been quite the opposite this year. This week we had just one qualifier and everybody got a real green track on race day. It was awesome to get through the first round with a very consistent car even with some issues at the top end powerwise.

"It's no secret that the left lane is much more competitive to race on than the right lane, and we knew that going in. I sat in the car for almost fifty-five minutes against Josh Hart, as the Safety Safari did the best job that they could on track prep. This is where my team really comes together. I had a conversation with Neal after forty minutes and after looking at the track, they didn't think we were going to make it off the line, so when they told me to 'do whatever you want to do as a driver', I got excited. This is your time. This is the Dodge//SRT U.S. Nationals. Usually as a driver you stage really shallow, you try to get the best E.T. that you can, but we wanted to take every advantage that we could. So I took a pretty good chunk out there, thinking I could distract him. I went 0.002 but just didn't have enough power because we had to back down our HEMI to get down that right lane and it was not enough to get around Josh Hart in that second round."

FACTORY STOCK SHOOTOUT:

Leah Pruett, 2021 Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak

(No. 12 Qualifier – 7.965 seconds at 166.70 mph)

Round 1: (0.060-second reaction time, 7.953 seconds at 176.93 mph) defeats No. 13 David Davies (0.095/7.959/175.89)

Round 2: (0.087/7.958/176.07) loss to No. 1 Joseph Welsh (0.016/7.831/177.65)

“Recently, our Factory Stock Showdown Dodge Drag Pak has performed in the clutch on Sunday’s and making race day very exciting. Today, we just did not have enough against the No. 1 qualifier in the other lane. We put on a good race, but it was a power management situation. Running early in the morning for E1, we were able to find that power and then we had about six hours before the second round. We just weren’t able to turn on the win light. We still have a strong hold in the points standings in the Factory Stock class. We will be testing before our next race at St. Louis and I’m excited about that. We have a good team with Kevin (Helms) and AJ (Berge) and we hope to get back to going rounds in a few weeks.”

Mark Pawuk, Empaco Equipment Mopar Drag Pak

(No. 22 Qualifier – 13.781 seconds. at 75.07 mph)

Round 1: (0.061-second reaction time, 7.973 seconds at 177.32 mph) loss to No. 3 Jesse Alexandra (0.025/7.924/170.36)

“Unfortunately with not getting down the track in Q1 on Friday and rain all day yesterday, it put us behind the eight ball coming into Sunday. We did make a big improvement. It ran 7.97 at 177 mph, which is the best speed we’ve run in a long time. We’re heading in the right direction with this Empaco Drag Pak. We had a driver error in the first round. I was a little late. We got the new car blues out of the way and we’ll run better at St. Louis.”

David Davies, D H Davies Racing Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak

(No. 13 Qualifier – 7.969 seconds at 176.79 mph)

Round 1: (0.095-second reaction time, 7.959 seconds at 175.89 mph) loss to No. 12 Leah Pruett (0.060/7.953/176.93 mph)

“We’re obviously excited to be racing on Sunday. Anytime you race a team car and Leah Pruett, that’s a tough draw. We lost by six thou and that’s the right way to lose if you have to lose a race. Losing to a teammate makes it less painful. I’m excited about what we’ve done with the car. We’re starting to get this thing dialed in. We were happy with our runs this weekend with only two laps and we’re looking forward to the last two Constant Aviation Factory Stock Showdown races at St. Louis and Vegas to get ready for next year.”

NHRA Championship Points Standings:

Following the Dodge//SRT NHRA U.S. Nationals at Lucas Oil Raceway in Indianapolis

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. **Ron Capps (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 981 (1)**
2. John Force – 938 (3)
3. Bob Tasca III – 937 (2)
4. J.R. Todd – 931 (1)
5. Robert Hight – 867 (2)
6. **Matt Hagan (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 865 (2)**
7. Alexis DeJoria – 835
8. **Cruz Pedregon (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 825 (1)**
9. Tim Wilkerson – 801 (1)
10. Blake Alexander – 519

TOP FUEL (season wins in parentheses)

1. Steve Torrance – 1389 (8)

2. Brittany Force – 978 (1)
3. Antron Brown – 839 (1)
- 4. Leah Pruett (Mopar Dodge/SRT) – 712 (1)**
5. Shawn Langdon – 668
6. Mike Salinas – 646
7. Justin Ashley – 627
8. Billy Torrence – 621 (1)
9. Clay Millican – 594
10. Doug Kalitta – 588

FACTORY STOCK SHOWDOWN

1. Aaron Stanfield –533
2. David Barton –396
3. Jesse Alexandra –372
4. John Cerbone – 342
- 5. Leah Pruett (2021 Mopar Drag Pak)– 332**
6. David Janac – 314
7. Stephen Bell – 307
8. Dan Condon – 235
9. Arthur Kohn – 231
10. Doug Hamp – 230

DodgeGarage: Digital Hub for Drag Racing News

Fans can follow all the NHRA 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.

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.

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.

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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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