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Pedregon Powers to No. 1 Qualifier Position Aboard Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat at Mopar Express Lane NHRA Nationals Presented by Pennzoil

- Cruz Pedregon powered the Snap-On Tools Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car to the No.1 qualifier position at Mopar Express Lane Nationals Presented by Pennzoil to kick off the National Hot Rod Association's (NHRA) "Countdown to the Championship" playoff series
- Tommy Johnson Jr. qualified fourth aboard the Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat as the fill-in driver at Maple Grove Raceway for sidelined defending series Funny Car world champion Matt Hagan who continues to recover from COVID-19
- Ron Capps followed up his runner-up finish at the Dodge//SRT U.S. Nationals last weekend with a top-five qualifying effort aboard his DSR Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car at one of the fastest tracks on the NHRA circuit
- DSR Top Fuel driver Leah Pruett qualifies No. 8 aboard her white and blue Mopar Dodge//SRT dragster

September 11, 2021, Mohnton, Pennsylvania - Cruz Pedregon powered his Snap-on Tools Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car to the No. 1 qualifier position to kick off the National Hot Rod Association's (NHRA) "Countdown to the Championship" playoff series at the Mopar Express Lane Nationals Presented by Pennzoil near Reading, Pennsylvania. It was his 62nd career pole position and the first time since 2015 that Cruz Pedregon Racing will start from the top rung of the eliminations ladder.

Pedregon came out of the gate fourth quickest in Friday's evening qualifying session at the fastest track on the circuit with a 3.914-second pass which he then improved upon in Saturday's Q2 with a 3.912-second effort to record the second quickest run of that session. In final qualifying, Pedregon jumped to the top of the timing sheets by driving his Snap-on Tools Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat to an impressive 3.875-second elapsed time at 326 mph to earn the No. 1 qualifier position and five valuable bonus points. The run brought Pedregon within a hair of his best career elapsed time run, posted just a few weeks ago at Brainerd with a 3.874 second /324.67 mph pass in the final session for the No. 2 spot from which he drove to a runner-up in an all-Dodge final against Don Schumacher Racing's (DSR) Matt Hagan. Pedregon's reward for the No. 1 qualifying effort at Maple Grove Raceway is a first round bye.

The second of three HEMI®-powered machines to qualify in top-five for the Mopar Express Lane Nationals was driven by Tommy Johnson Jr. who is filling-in this weekend for DSR's sidelined defending series Funny Car world champion Hagan as he continues to recover from COVID-19. Johnson will start fourth after recording a career-best speed with his Friday night qualifying run of 3.895 seconds at 333.82 mph that put him in the provisional No. 2 spot and awarded two bonus points to the DSR Mopar Dodge SRT Hellcat entry. He will see No. 11 Jim Campbell in the opening round.

Last weekend's runner-up finisher at the Dodge//SRT NHRA U.S. Nationals, Ron Capps qualified fifth after driving his NAPA AUTO PARTS Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat to the quickest run in Q2 with a 3.896-second pass. He added three bonus points to his lead atop the NHRA's Funny Car championship standings and will see No. 10 seed Blake Alexander as his first match-up of race day.

In Top Fuel action, Leah Pruett's quickest drive aboard the white and blue Mopar dragster came on Friday evening with a run of 3.733 seconds at 323.89 mph, which she followed up with another pair of 3.74 sec. passes on Saturday. She'll start from the eighth seeded position and face-off against No. 7 seed Antron Brown who has lane choice.

Coverage of the Mopar Express Lane NHRA Nationals Presented by Pennzoil, the first of seven events in the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) playoff series "Countdown to the Championship", will be broadcast on FS1 on

Sunday, Sept. 14, with qualifying highlights 12-2 p.m. ET and race coverage 2-5 p.m. ET.

ADDITIONAL NOTES and QUOTES

FUNNY CAR:

Tommy Johnson Jr., DSR Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat

(No. 4 Qualifier – 3.895 seconds at 333.82 mph)

Qualifying 1: 3.895 seconds at 333.82 mph (Two bonus points for No. 2 run of the session)

Qualifying 2: 4.426 seconds at 187.65 mph

Qualifying 3: 3.917 seconds at 325.85 mph

“With each run I get more comfortable and it feels more natural in this Mopar Dodge. This team is doing such a great job. We have a great race car and I’m just looking forward to tomorrow. It’s been a long time since I’ve been out here on a race day Sunday. I’ve been at home watching on the computer on NHRA.TV and Fox and now we get to do it for real and make our mark.”

Ron Capps, DSR NAPA Auto Parts Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat

(No. 5 Qualifier – 3.896 seconds at 328.86 mph)

Qualifying 1: 3.932 seconds at 325.06 mph

Qualifying 2: 3.896 seconds at 328.86 mph

Qualifying 3: 5.480 seconds at 133.55 mph

“This race ups the ante with it being the start of the Countdown and the feeling you get in the pit area, not only just the drivers but the crew chiefs and the teams as well. You definitely have the playoff fever floating around. We went out with that typical NAPA Know How today and went out in Q2 and got three qualifying bonus points with the quickest run in the heat at 3.89. And, tomorrow, Sunday, is going to be just like that. We didn’t qualify as high as we would have liked, but we were still in the top half and it’s a strange ladder. Any car in that ladder is one that can win a race; it’s so tight in Funny Car. We’ll concentrate on one round at a time and it’s going to be warmer tomorrow. The track is going to be great and we’re looking forward to seeing what ‘Guido’ (Dean Antonelli) and (John) Medlen and our NAPA AutoCare team can put together for us.”

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

(No. 1 Qualifier – 3.874 seconds at 326.00 mph)

Qualifying 1: 3.914 seconds at 321.42 mph

Qualifying 2: 3.912 seconds at 327.03 mph (Two bonus points for second-quickest run of session)

Qualifying 3: 3.875 seconds at 326.00 mph (Three bonus points for quickest run of session)

“I didn’t even realize it (last No. 1 qualifier position) was that long ago (2015). We’ve been steady and knocking on the door this year and we were definitely trying. My crew chief, John Collins was definitely fighting for it because with the brackets the way they are he knew that it would pay off to get that No. 1 spot. You’ve got to get on the right side of the ladder to avoid the big hitters until the later rounds and it couldn’t have worked out better for us today. The car was responding and has been for the last six races. I don’t know that I’ve driven a car as consistent as this Snap-on Dodge Hellcat. It’s not easy to drive as it wanted to hunt around there, but it’s going places, that’s for sure.”

“The points are important and it’s a nice feather in the team’s cap that we can, after three runs, when everybody had the same track conditions, for us to come out on top. It really says a lot about the team and JC (Collins) that we have the parts, equipment, the car and as a single car team to be able to go head to head with some of these guys. From that perspective getting No.1 is great. But it’s going rounds that will be key, and having a consistent car wins rounds. There will be guys going after us but we’ll answer the bell and keep coming out swinging.”

TOP FUEL:

Leah Pruett, DSR Pennzoil Mopar Dodge//SRT Dragster

(No. 8 Qualifier – 3.733 seconds at 323.89 mph)

Qualifying 1: 3.733 seconds at 323.89 mph

Qualifying 2: 3.748 seconds at 323.66 mph

Qualifying 3: 3.743 seconds at 282.54 mph

"I really like to go back to the foundation of a great weekend, and that started for us with a great run on Friday. We were shooting for a low 3.70 and that gave us something to work off of. When we look at Sundays where we've done well, ultimately, we've always had a great start to the weekend. So, we have that in our corner going into race day. Going into Q2, we were shooting for a high 3.60 and we missed it in the clutch department a little bit so we made some major changes. We're in Amish country and for Q3, we were putting all 12,000 HEMI horses to it, and it took it to halftrack. We were on track for that high 3.60 we were shooting for but then the car kicked a belt at halftrack and we missed it. The most unfortunate part of qualifying is that we're up against our teammate Antron Brown. We would've loved nothing more than to meet him in the final but we are so close in points that someone is going to get a leg up on the other one, and hopefully, it's us.

"Our Mopar Dodge dragster is running exceptionally well and we feel good about tomorrow. For me personally, I haven't had the best luck here at Reading, and because of that, I've gotten to know a lot of the fans and spend a lot of time with them. It's an awesome group, and I'm really taking their energy and their vibe and enthusiasm into race day, and will hopefully carry that deep into the elimination rounds. We're looking for great results here at the Mopar Express Lane NHRA Nationals Presented by Pennzoil."

NHRA Championship Points Standings:

Following qualifying at Mopar Express Lane Nationals Presented by Pennzoil at Maple Grove Raceway

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. **Ron Capps (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 2,137 (1)**
2. John Force – 2,112 (3)
3. Bob Tasca III – 2,106 (2)
4. J.R. Todd – 2,093 (1)
5. **Matt Hagan/Tommy Johnson Jr. (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 2,087 (2)**
6. Robert Hight – 2,081 (2)
7. Alexis DeJoria – 2,063
7. **Cruz Pedregon (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 2,063 (1)**
9. Tim Wilkerson – 2,048 (1)
10. Blake Alexander – 2,032

TOP FUEL (season wins in parentheses)

1. Steve Torrance – 2,139 (8)
2. Brittany Force – 2,127 (1)
3. Antron Brown – 2,103 (1)
4. **Leah Pruett (Mopar Dodge//SRT) – 2,093 (1)**
5. Shawn Langdon – 2,082
6. Mike Salinas – 2,078
7. Justin Ashley – 2,064
8. Billy Torrence – 2,057 (1)
9. Clay Millican – 2,047
10. Doug Kalitta – 2,032

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 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.

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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