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Dominant Performance by Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat as Hagan Wins NHRA Midwest Nationals and Powers to Funny Car Championship Lead

- Defending Funny Car world champion Matt Hagan powered his Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) New Holland Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat from the No. 1 qualifier position to a victory at the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Midwest Nationals at World Wide Technology Raceway
- Hagan earned his first Wally trophy from the St. Louis venue and 39th career win to move into the lead in the battle to defend his Funny Car crown with four NHRA playoff series events remaining
- No. 2 qualifier Ron Capps and his DSR Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat had a quarterfinal finish, leaves World Wide Technology Raceway second in the NHRA "Countdown to the Championship" standings and 59 markers behind DSR teammate Hagan
- No. 5 qualifier Cruz Pedregon drives his Snap-on Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car to a semifinal finish and into fourth place in the championship points standings
- DSR Top Fuel pilot Leah Pruett powered her Okuma Mopar Dodge//SRT dragster from the No. 4 spot on the eliminations ladder to a semifinal appearance
- Factory Stock Showdown penultimate race of the season saw Mark Pawuk run his career-best speed aboard 2021 Empaco Equipment Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak on his way to a semifinal finish at St. Louis

September 26, 2021, Madison, Illinois - Defending National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Funny Car world champion Matt Hagan powered his Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) New Holland Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat from the No. 1 qualifier position to the winner's circle at the Midwest Nationals near St. Louis in dominant fashion to take over the lead in the "Countdown to the Championship".

Hagan kicked off the third of seven NHRA playoff series events by driving his HEMI-powered machine to the provisional No. 2 spot at World Wide Technology Raceway in Friday evening qualifying to find himself closing in on DSR teammate and points leader Ron Capps on the provisional timing sheets as well as the Funny Car championship standings. From there Hagan never looked back and laid down the quickest laps in both Saturday qualifying sessions with a final pass of 3.868 seconds at 333.25 mph to secure his third No. 1 qualifier position of the year, a 43rd overall, and collect eight of nine possible bonus points to put him just one marker behind Capps heading into Sunday's elimination rounds.

Hagan had an opening round bye run and a quarterfinal win against J.R. Todd to move on to an all-Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat semifinal against No. 5 seed Cruz Pedregon. Both launched and battled side-by-side the entire length of the track with Hagan (0.086/3.922/328.30) turning on the win lights over Pedregon (0.083/3.954/323.58) to advance to his fifth final round showdown of the season. Facing off against No. 6 seed Bob Tasca, Hagan got out of the gate first and made another solid sub four-second run (3.933) at 333.49 mph to earn his first Wally trophy from the St. Louis venue.

The win was Hagan's third of the season, the 39th of his career, and a fourth for his crew thanks to the victory earned in the playoff opener in Reading, Pennsylvania with substitute driver Tommy Johnson Jr., who slipped into the Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat seat as its regular driver recovered from COVID-19. With two playoff wins in three events, Hagan moved into the top spot in the Funny Car championship battle with a 59-point lead over his fellow DSR stablemate Capps.

Capps' weekend began by driving his NAPA AUTO PARTS Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat to the provisional No. 1 spot

on Friday and the second best run in final qualifying on Saturday to add five bonus points to his points tally and earn the No. 2 spot on the elimination ladder, the 13th time this season he has qualified in a top-five position. He powered his hard-charging HEMI-powered machine to an impressive 3.854-second elapsed time run at 333-mph in the opening round to defeat No. 15 seed Chris King whose racecar faltered right off the start.

Capps advanced to a quarterfinal match-up against fellow championship contender John Force, who has been regularly staging his racecar deep into the starting line beams to distract his opponents. While aware and prepared for Force's tactics, the veteran DSR driver had an uncharacteristic start that allowed his opponent to take the early lead. Capps gave chase with a 3.929-second pass but unfortunately wasn't able to beat Force's slower 3.970-second lap. Despite the premature exit, Capps remains second in the Funny Car championship battle.

Fellow Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car driver Cruz Pedregon followed up last weekend's runner-up performance at the NHRA Carolina Nationals with a fifth place start for the Midwest Nationals by recording a 3.896 sec./328.62 mph pass, the fourth quickest in the final session, to mark the fifth consecutive event he has qualified in the top-five. Pedregon defeated No. 12 seed Jim Campbell and No. 4 qualifier Blake Alexander in the first two round elimination rounds to advance to the semifinals and lineup his Snap-on Tools "Socket to Breast Cancer" machine next eventual round and event winner Hagan.

After closing out the regular season eighth in the Funny Car standings, the Cruz Pedregon Racing team's steady improvement through three consecutive playoff events moves the team up into fourth place with five races remaining.

In Top Fuel action, DSR pilot Leah Pruett earned the No. 4 seeded position by wheeling her Okuma Mopar Dodge//SRT dragster to the third-quickest pass in the final qualifying session to pit her against No. 13 seed Clay Millican in the opening round. Pruett was first off the line with a 3.701-second pass at 326.16 mph to earn the opening round win over Millican's 3.883 sec./253.80 mph pass, and followed that up with a quarterfinal win over Billy Torrence who faltered early in the run. She then advanced to the semifinals to face No. 1 qualifier Mike Salinas, against whom Pruett's hopes of continuing on to the finals went up in tire smoke right at the hit. Pruett and her Mopar Dodge//SRT dragster come away from this weekend's event sitting sixth in the battle for the Top Fuel crown.

After four consecutive weekends of racing the NHRA will take a weekend off before returning to action Oct. 7-10 for the Texas NHRA Fall Nationals, the fourth of seven "Countdown to the Championship" playoff events, at Texas Motorplex near Dallas, Texas.

The Constant Aviation Factory Stock Showdown (FSS) returned to competition this weekend for the penultimate event of the eight-race series and saw Mark Pawuk lead the way for the trio of DSR-prepared 2021 Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Paks by qualifying No. 2 on the eliminations ladder with a career-best run at 7.772-second at 179.14 mph ahead of teammates Pruett (No. 5) and David Davies II (No. 7).

Pawuk improved his newest generation Mopar Drag Pak's performance further as he ran down No. 15 seed Lee Hartman with another career-best speed during his 7.816 second pass at 182.50 mph for the opening round win. He then used a 0.008-second reaction time against David Davies II in the quarterfinals on his way to a 7.829 sec./178.80 mph pass to reach the stripe ahead of his teammate's solid 7.839 sec./178.02 mph run. In the semifinals Pawuk recorded a perfect 0.000-second launch against No. 3 qualifier Leonard Lottig, and even with a solid 7.871 sec./177.88 mph pass, he wasn't able to fend off his opponent's 7.809 sec./176.01 mph winning run.

Davies had his best qualifying effort this season aboard the D H Davies Racing Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak to start eliminations from the seventh place on the ladder with his 7.829 seconds at 177.79 mph effort. He rode that momentum into Sunday's competition where he used a holeshot to earn his first round win of the year over Joseph Welch by six thousandths-of-a second with a career-best 7.825-second run at 175.73 mph. That set up the all-Dodge quarterfinal match up with teammate and eventual round winner Pawuk.

Pruett qualified her DSR Mopar Drag Pak fifth for eliminations with a solid 7.821 second qualifying run at 177.51 mph which set up a first round showdown against John Cerbone. She posted a 0.091-second start and a 7.982 sec./169.04 mph run against Cerbone, but it wasn't quite enough to beat her opponent's 0.046-second launch and 7.883 sec./177.72 mph winning effort. The final Factory Stock Showdown of the season will take place at the Dodge//SRT NHRA Las Vegas Nationals Presented by Pennzoil at the end of October.

ADDITIONAL NOTES and QUOTES

FUNNY CAR:

Matt Hagan, DSR New Holland Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat

(No. 1 Qualifier – 3.868 seconds at 333.25 mph)

Round 1: (0.249-second reaction time, 3.929 seconds at 327.43 mph) on a Bye run

Round 2: (0.065/3.894/332.18) defeats No. 9 J.R. Todd (0.078/4.571/182.21)

Round 3: (0.086/3.922/328.30) defeats No. 3 Cruz Pedregon (0.083/3.954/323.58)

Round 4: (0.047/3.933/333.49) defeats No. 6 Bob Tasca (0.059/3.967/329.99)

“When you’ve got a combination and a package like we do, it’s hard to beat. The way (Crew Chief) Dickie (Venables) has got this car running, as long as I do my job, it’s going to turn the win light on. You try not to focus too much on the points because it changes so fast from day to day, and race to race out here. You can be on top of the points one day and then you go out first-round the next day, so we take it in stride. Over the years, the championships that I won, I’ve really just tried to focus on what I can control, and everyone else has to do their job, and I’m fortunate in that I’m in a situation where I truly can depend on my team.

“We only have four more races left after this, so the pressure is there, but I’ve been there before, I understand the hunt, and I know that our car is going to be a really serious contender. I honestly really think we can win this championship with the way Dickie’s got this thing running. (Ron) Capps is going to be tough, (John) Force is going to be tough, all of them, really. These crew chiefs are throwing down, it’s like a slugfest out there.”

Ron Capps, DSR NAPA AUTO PARTS Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat

(No. 2 Qualifier – 3.876 seconds at 333.82 mph)

Round 1: (0.085-second reaction time, 3.854 seconds at 333.41) defeats No. 15 Chris King (0.098/6.016/123.07)

Round 2: (0.121/3.929/326.56) loss to No. 10 John Force (0.039/3.970/328.70)

“[[Force’s deep stage] definitely threw me off. Add me to the list. We saw it happen with Robert Hight earlier and he’s as good as it gets out here as a driver. You know (John) Force is going to do it, it’s a possibility. When the light went off on the last second, you’re so focused on your ambers, you do see it out of the corner of your eye, and most of the time I run him I’m laughing in the car because he tries to do that to me. I’ve been driving for 27 years, I don’t think I’ve ever had a light (start) that bad in eliminations, especially with the pressure like we have right now. I let my guys down, and it hurts bad right now, but we have a great hot rod, that’s the good thing. I’m better than that. We don’t have the luxury of making another lap and trying to make up for it like NASCAR or IndyCar guys when they have something go wrong. This is it; it happens, and you have to live with it and I’ve got two weeks to think about it.”

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

(No. 5 Qualifier – 3.896 seconds at 328.62 mph)

Round 1: (0.092-second reaction time, 3.913 seconds at 327.03 mph) defeats No. 12 Jim Campbell (0.100/4.005/313.22)

Round 2: (0.077/4.127/243.06) defeats No. 4 Blake Alexander (0.107/8.867/73.85)

Round 3: (0.083/3.954/323.58) loss to No. 1 Matt Hagan (0.086/3.922/328.30)

“Overall it was a great event for us. We actually moved up to fourth in the points with four races remaining in the 2021 NHRA season. We qualified fifth with a 3.89 at 328 mph run and lost a close semifinal race to eventual event winner Matt Hagan. It was a good run for us, with a 3.92, to a 3.95. I didn’t see him until the finish line there, so he got past us there right at the end. It was really a good event for us and another consistent race. We’re pleased. Obviously we would always like to win these races, but anytime you can go to the semis, especially in these countdown races where the competition is just so tough, where everybody’s qualified so close top to bottom. We’re just really pleased. I thank (Crew Chief) JC (John Collins) and (assistant Crew Chief) Rip (Reynolds) and the whole team for giving me another great car. We would have liked to have gotten that race win against Matt (Hagan), but hats off to my Dodge teammate who went on to win the race. We’ll move on and get some needed rest here before we head to Dallas. We’ll make some test runs on Wednesday there for the Fan Fest. There’s a little more incentive to run well there with the promotions run by the Billy Meyer track there in Ennis (Texas). I love the Ennis track. It’s awesome and I’ve won

a lot of big races there through the years. I remember my first year (1992 championship year) was against John Force where we both smoked the tires and it was a classic race that a lot of fans still talk about to this day. We're going to go full speed ahead and try to stay in the hunt. We're really not too far out of the lead and it's still a workable scenario there for us to get in the points. We just have to keep at it and keep it consistent."

TOP FUEL:

Leah Pruett, DSR Okuma Mopar Dodge//SRT Dragster

(No. 4 Qualifier – 3.714 seconds at 326.00 mph)

Round 1: (0.064-second reaction time, 3.701 seconds at 326.16 mph) defeats No. 13 Clay Millican (0.081/3.883/253.80)

Round 2: (0.045/3.769/316.01) defeats No. 5 Billy Torrence (0.095/6.575/122.59)

Round 3: (0.090/20.077/No Speed) loss to No. 1 Mike Salinas (0.038/3.713/328.06)

"Reaching the semifinals is always a plus, and some of those ahead of us went out early so that helps bunch up the points a bit. We had some big match-ups today. The first round against Clay (Millican), you never know what they're going to throw out there, that's a fast car. Our Okuma (Mopar Dodge//SRT) machine laid down a solid 3.70 pass. That second round was big and that was a fun race against Billy (Torrence) and he's right ahead of us in the points and that's an opportunity to be the giant killer and pass them. Getting that win from burnout to turnout was great. We had to swap blowers before the semis and that changed the tune-up a little bit. I wish I could put my thumb on what happened and why it smoked the tires at the hit, but we don't have any data from that run. It shows the clutch was charged during staging and then nothing. Disappointed, slightly. Heartbroken, absolutely not. Something about this weekend and this team just resonates, and it's really hard to beat a team who never gives up. That's exactly who we are. We'll keep going with this momentum in Dallas."

FACTORY STOCK SHOOTOUT:

Leah Pruett, 2021 Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak

(No. 5 Qualifier – 7.821 seconds at 177.51 mph)

Round 1: (0.091-second reaction time, 7.982 seconds at 169.04 mph) loss to No. 12 John Cerbone (0.046/7.883/177.72)

"Talk about a phantom and we've nickname this beauty 'phantom' and we had phantom issues with our Mopar Drag Pak. We lost boost on a qualifying run and swapped superchargers and compressors and then for E1 we put a new adjuster on it and it lost boost earlier in the run. There's something plaguing us with a really good running Dodge. We do plan to test before (Las) Vegas as we want to finish strong. Our team, as a whole, is very strong going rounds with Mark (Pawuk) to the semis and Dave (Davies) getting his first round win. I'm having a great time driving. It does hurt not going rounds, but this team has been through a lot, but we have shown what it needs to push forward and make the right calls."

Mark Pawuk, 2021 Empaco Equipment Mopar Drag Pak

(No. 2 Qualifier – 7.772 seconds. at 179.14 mph)

Round 1: (0.123-second reaction time, 7.816 seconds at 182.50 mph) defeats No. 15 Lee Hartman (0.036/7.987/173.83)

Round 2: (0.008/7.829/178.80) defeats No. 7 David Davies II (0.092/7.839/178.02)

Round 3: (0.000/7.871/177.88) loss to No. 3 Leonard Lottig (0.055/7.809/176.01)

"We're very happy with the performance of the race car this weekend at St. Louis. We ran very well all weekend with this Empaco Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak at DSR. The driver did his job, unfortunately, there was a malfunction in the semis after I cut a triple-o (.000) light when the car shifted from first to third and that slowed us down and I lost by seven thousandths (of-a-second). That was really disappointing. I thought this could be my weekend to get back into the NHRA winner's circle. We have a fast hot rod. Everybody on the team did a great job. We'll keep fighting. We need to get this shifter thing figured out because it happened twice this weekend. We'll get it fixed and I'm looking forward to finishing out the season at (Las) Vegas on a high."

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

(No. 7 Qualifier – 7.829 seconds at 177.79 mph)

Round 1: (0.041-second reaction time, 7.982 seconds at 175.73 mph) defeats No. 10 Joe Welch (0.074/7.818/183.10 mph)

Round 2: (0.098/7.839/178.02) loss to No. 2 Mark Pawuk (0.008/7.829/178.80)

"We're very excited about the weekend. St. Louis is a great track and I've always had good luck here. Once again, even though we didn't race to the win, the cars are just about dialed in and if we're going to lose, why not to a teammate so one of us goes through. Mark (Pawuk) did a great job on the tree and the suspension changes we made to the car got us what we needed this weekend. The 60-foot times were fantastic and we are running 178, 179 mph. The Bilstein suspension system is really working well on these Drag Paks and we're ready for the last race at (Las) Vegas."

NHRA Championship Points Standings:

Following the NHRA Midwest Nationals at World Wide Technology Raceway

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

- 1. Matt Hagan (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 2,354 (3/1-TJ Johnson Jr.)**
- 2. Ron Capps (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 2,295 (1)**
3. John Force – 2,282 (3)
- 4. Cruz Pedregon (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 2,255 (1)**
5. J.R. Todd – 2,239 (1)
6. Bob Tasca III – 2,234 (2)
7. Robert Hight – 2,194 (2)
7. Tim Wilkerson – 2,194 (1)
9. Alexis DeJoria – 2,163
10. Blake Alexander – 2,120

TOP FUEL (season wins in parentheses)

1. Steve Torrance – 2,373 (9)
2. Brittany Force – 2,337 (1)
3. Billy Torrence – 2,247 (2)
4. Mike Salinas – 2,239
5. Justin Ashley – 2,235 (1)
- 6. Leah Pruett (Mopar Dodge//SRT) – 2,222 (1)**
7. Antron Brown – 2,188 (1)
8. Shawn Langdon – 2,164
9. Clay Millican – 2,157
10. Doug Kalitta – 2,096

FACTORY STOCK SHOWDOWN

1. Aaron Stanfield – 651
2. David Barton – 430
3. John Cerbone – 409
4. Jesse Alexandra – 403
5. David Janac – 367
- 6. Leah Pruett (2021 Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak) – 366**
7. Stephen Bell – 339
- 8. Mark Pawuk (2021 Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak) – 304**
9. Leonard Lottig – 283
10. Doug Hamp – 281

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.

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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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