

Contact:

Hagan Wheels Dodge Power Brokers Funny Car to Semifinal Performance in NHRA 'Countdown to the Championship' Kick-off

- Tony Stewart Racing (TSR) pilot Matt Hagan drove his No. 5 qualified Dodge Power Brokers Funny Car to the semifinals at the Pep Boys Nationals near Reading, Pennsylvania, in the first of six National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) "Countdown to the Championship" playoff series events
- Hagan's semifinal performance at Maple Grove Raceway moves him into second place in the Funny Car playoff standings behind points leader and event winner Robert Hight
- TSR's Leah Pruett qualified her Rayce Rudeen Foundation Dodge//SRT dragster tenth on the Top Fuel eliminations ladder for the first playoff elimination of the season but saw her race day shortened by loss of traction in the first round
- Pruett leaves Maple Grove Raceway tied with Doug Kalitta in eighth place in the Top Fuel playoff standings
- Cruz Pedregon qualified his Snap-on Tools Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat eighth on the Funny Car eliminations ladder and had a quarterfinals performance to keep him eighth in the playoff standings heading to the Carolina Nationals next weekend

September 18, 2022, Reading, Pennsylvania - The National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) "Countdown to the Championship" six-event playoff series opened with the 37th annual Pep Boys NHRA Nationals at Maple Grove Raceway near Reading, Pennsylvania, and three Dodge//SRT supported entries ready to vie for the Camping World Drag Racing series' top honors in two nitro categories.

Following the Dodge Power Brokers U.S. Nationals in Indianapolis, Tony Stewart Racing's Funny Car driver Matt Hagan closed out the regular season with three wins, three runner-up finishes, five No. 1 qualifier awards, and with the points reset for the playoffs, the three-time world champ officially began the Countdown ranked third in the Funny Car standings behind Robert Hight and Ron Capps.

Hagan got things started at Maple Grove Raceway by qualifying his Dodge Power Brokers Charger SRT Hellcat fifth on the eliminations ladder with a solid 3.906-second elapsed time run at 326.32 mph. On race day he drove his way through to the semifinals by recording round wins over No. 12 seed Jim Campbell and No. 4 qualifier Bob Tasca to face No. 1 qualifier Hight. The two semifinal competitors launched and battled closely until a loss of traction slowed Hagan's progress and dashed any hope of advancing further.

Hagan's eliminations performance at Reading put him and his HEMI®-powered Hellcat second in the playoff standings, 81 points behind event winner and category leader Hight with five races remaining to battle for the 2022 Funny Car World Championship title.

TSR's Top Fuel driver Leah Pruett, who earned a Wally trophy in the regular season at the Dodge Power Brokers Mile-High Nationals in Denver, got her playoff run started at Reading aboard her Rayce Rudeen Foundation Dodge//SRT dragster from seventh place in the Countdown standings. In qualifying, Pruett improved her ride with each pass, added a valuable bonus point with the third quickest run of the second qualifying session at 3.736 seconds at 328.62 mph, and put herself tenth on the eliminations ladder with her final 3.734 second/328.38 mph lap.

Her opponent for the opening elimination round of the Countdown was No. 7 qualifier Doug Kalitta but while the pair both had good starts, Pruett saw her hopes of challenging for the round win go up in tire smoke. With the results, Pruett finds herself tied with Kalitta for eighth in the Top Fuel championship standings, 107 markers behind playoff points leader Justin Ashley.

Fellow Dodge//SRT driver Cruz Pedregon, a two-time Funny Car world champion, is also in the playoff hunt and

started off the weekend at Maple Grove Raceway seeded eighth in the Countdown. He drove his Snap-on Tools Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat to a best qualifying run of 3.931 seconds at 319.45 mph to put himself in the No. 8 seeded position for Sunday's competition.

Pedregon turned on win lights in the opening round against No. 9 seed Paul Lee with a 3.918 second elapsed time run at 326.40 mph to advance to a quarterfinal meeting with No. 1 qualifier Hight. The pair had identical reaction times of 0.085-seconds, but the Cruz Pedregon Racing machine began to lose traction early in the run and was unable to continue to challenge. With the quarterfinal performance, Pedregon remains eighth in the playoff standings, 151 points behind the Funny Car points leader.

The NHRA "Countdown to the Championship" continues next weekend with the second of six playoff series events, the Betway NHRA Carolina Nationals, at zMAX Dragway in Concord, N.C., Sept. 23-25. FS1 will air qualifying highlights on Friday, Sept. 23, at 7 p.m. ET and Sunday, Sept 25, at 2 a.m. ET, while race day coverage begins at 3 p.m. ET.

ADDITIONAL NOTES and QUOTES:

Leah Pruett, Rayce Rudeen Foundation Dodge//SRT Top Fuel Dragster

(No. 10 Qualifier – 3.734 seconds at 328.38 mph)

Round 1: (0.080-second reaction time, 4.458-second elapsed time run at 224.51 mph) loss to No. 7 Doug Kalitta (0.071/3.720/329.58)

"We definitely had a very promising race car and I would consider it one of the most promising cars considering we were the only one to make three clean, full passes in qualifying. Unfortunately, when you have the first round in a matchup with a championship contender close to you in points and qualifying, you're going to have a close race and that's what we were prepared for. We moved in a way to improve our short times. It's something we've been working on for a while - to try and get better 60-foot times and our increments to 330, which means we have to push harder. We tried to push a little bit harder and the Rayce Rudeen Foundation dragster didn't like it and we smoked the tires. The most frustrating part about it is we have been on this plan for three races or so and keep throwing a lot of power to different places on the car. It hasn't been reacting the way we want and at the most important time so far in the season, the car says 'oh, I recognize that and it's a little too much now.' For us to find that threshold in the first round of eliminations in the first race of the countdown is slightly frustrating. We will be testing between now and Charlotte to further our progress because in order for us to have a better ET (elapsed time), we have to start at the starting line to the 60-foot mark and improve our acceleration gain. We won't stop and that's the name of the game. There are five races remaining in the Countdown and anything can happen."

Matt Hagan, Dodge Power Brokers Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car

(No. 5 Qualifier – 3.906 seconds at 326.32 mph)

Round 1: (0.076-second reaction time, 3.909 seconds at 334.65 mph) defeats No. 12 Jim Campbell (0.125/4.445/207.53)

Round 2: (0.054/3.935/329.67) defeats No. 4 Bob Tasca (0.086/3.941/330.63)

Round 3: (0.078/4.123/255.34) loss to No. 1 Robert Hight (0.072/3.908/331.69)

"We had a pretty strong weekend. We qualified No. 5, so the biggest thing we have to focus on is qualifying in the No. 1, 2 or 3 spot. It really sets the tone for the weekend to put yourself on the correct side of the ladder that works in your favor. We had to get through some really tough cars this weekend by qualifying fifth. There are no easy rounds out there. All in all, I'm really happy with what my guys are doing. As far as putting the car together, we had two turns today that only lasted 35 minutes breaking the car apart, putting it back together and firing it up. The guys are working so well together and I'm really proud of them. We moved back up to second in the Countdown. Anytime you're gaining, I think it's positive. Robert (Hight) and those guys will be tough all season long. They have been tough and will continue to be. I think our clutch combination is what we're struggling with a little bit right now, but that's way above my pay grade. We will keep working on it more and I have nothing but faith in Dickie (Venables – crew chief), Mike (Knudsen – co-crew chief) and Alex (Conaway – car chief). We always run strong and are in the hunt, so I'm expecting the next five races we will run well and turn the win lights on."

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

(No. 8 Qualifier – 3.931 seconds at 319.45 mph)

Round 1: (0.105-second reaction time, 3.918 second elapsed time run at 326.40 mph) defeats to No. 9 Paul Lee (0.078/3.991/319.45)

Round 2: (0.085/5.567/135.46) loss to No. 1 Robert Hight (0.085/3.901/332.67)

“After qualifying in the top eight with a 3.93 (-second run) at 319 mph, we went up against Paul Lee, a formidable car, and disposed of him with a 3.91, which was our quickest run of the weekend. That was great run at 3.26 and we got the speed up on that run too. In the second round against Robert Hight, obviously one of the top cars in the field, we had a nice even start but the car spun the tires at about 200, 300 feet out, which looking back we determined that the clutch wear was down, which has been a little bit of a problem. Mechanically, when the clutch wear is down, it tends to have a more aggressive clutch application, so there's something we can do to get that where it doesn't become too aggressive for us. We're going to go back and get that logged into our system and get ready for Charlotte. We're feeling good actually. The Countdown is like the NFL playoffs in that if you get hot at the end, anything could happen and we did have our struggles this year, but I feel like we're making some good solid runs or we're starting to come into our own. It took a while, but you know it just takes a while sometimes to get things dialed in.”

NHRA CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS STANDINGS:

Following the Pep Boys Nationals at Maple Grove Raceway

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. Robert Hight 2225 (7)
2. **Matt Hagan (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat): 2144 (3)**
3. Ron Capps: 2141 (3)
4. John Force: 2128(1)
5. Bob Tasca III: 2119 (3)
6. Tim Wilkerson: 2103
7. J.R. Todd: 2095
8. **Cruz Pedregon (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat): 2073**
9. Alexis DeJoria: 2062
10. JIm Campbell: 2022
11. Blake Alexander: 2000

TOP FUEL (season wins in parentheses)

1. Justin Ashley: 2170 (2)
2. Brittany Force: 2161 (4)
3. Mike Salinas: 2160 (4)
4. Antron Brown 2116 (2)
4. Steve Torrence: 2114 (1)
5. Austin Prock: 2096 (1)
7. Josh Hart: 2083 (1)
8. **Leah Pruett (Dodge Power Brokers): 2063 (1)**
8. Doug Kalitta: 2063
10. Shawn Langdon: 2052
11. Clay Millican: 2046
12. Tony Schumacher: 2032 (1)

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](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.

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 a lineup that delivers unrivaled performance in each of the segments where they compete.

Dodge drives forward as a pure performance brand, offering SRT Hellcat versions of the Dodge Challenger, Dodge Charger and Dodge Durango, as well as an R/T plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) version of the all-new 2023 Dodge Hornet, representing the brand's first-ever electrified performance vehicle. Dodge delivers the drag-strip dominating 807-horsepower Dodge Challenger SRT Super Stock; the 797-horsepower Dodge Charger SRT Redeye, the most powerful and fastest mass-produced sedan in the world; and the 710-horsepower Dodge Durango SRT Hellcat, the most powerful SUV ever; and best-in-class standard performance in the compact utility vehicle segment with the Dodge Hornet. Combined, these four muscle vehicles make Dodge the industry's most powerful brand, offering more horsepower than any other American brand across its entire lineup.

In 2022, the Dodge brand ranked No. 1 in the [J.D. Power APEAL Study](#) (mass market), making it the only domestic brand ever to do so three years in a row. 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).

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

Mopar

This year marks the 85th anniversary of Mopar, the global name for Stellantis genuine parts and authentic accessories.

A simple combination of the words MOTO and PARTS, Mopar offers exceptional service, parts and customer-care. Born in 1937 as the name of a line of antifreeze products, Mopar has evolved over 85 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, Mopar expanded to include technical service and customer support, and today integrates service, parts and customer-care operations in order to enhance customer and dealer support worldwide.

Complete information on Mopar is available at www.mopar.com and the newly redesigned Mopar blog at blog.mopar.com. For more information regarding Stellantis (NYSE: STLA), please visit www.stellantis.com.

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