

Busy Preparation Drives Hagan's TSR Dodge Crew After Qualifying Challenges at NHRA Charlotte Event

- Wild ride for Matt Hagan and his Dodge//SRT Hellcat Funny Car makes for a busy preparation for his Tony Stewart Racing (TSR) crew with the Route 66 Raceway event coming on May 19-21
- A parachute failure at the NHRA Four-Wide Nationals in Charlotte on April 28-30 caused Hagan to drive into the track's sand trap, hitting the safety net and damaging the Operation Healing Forces Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car chassis
- The TSR crew, led by Dickie Venables, brought out the backup Direct Connection-bodied Dodge//SRT Hellcat machine after the incident

May 16, 2023, Brownsburg, Ind. - Stopping a 330-mph, nitro-breathing monster can be a handful. Just ask three-time NHRA Camping World Funny Car champion Matt Hagan.

Hagan, the hottest driver entering the NHRA Circle K Four-Wide Nationals at Charlotte, had won three of the first four 2023 NHRA national events with his Tony Stewart Racing (TSR) Direct Connection Dodge//SRT Hellcat and was seeking a fourth Wally trophy two weeks ago at zMAX Dragway.

The opening round of qualifying, with four nitro-burning machines, was set on Friday afternoon and Hagan's 1,000-foot pass was a good one. But there was a problem with the car at the finish line at 326 mph.

The two parachutes attached to the rear of Hagan's Dodge//SRT Hellcat didn't deploy. A small part in the release of the chutes failed and, while he was hard on the car's brakes, Hagan had to drive his Dodge Funny Car into the sand trap at the end of the track, then the safety netting stationed for stopping racing vehicles.

Hagan walked away from the incident, but his Dodge//SRT Hellcat was damaged. The carbon-fiber body was destroyed, and the car's chassis was bent. This required the TSR crew to pull out the team's backup Dodge for the remainder of the weekend's racing events.

"We are always prepared for anything with the primary car," said Dickie Venables, crew chief for Hagan's Dodge//SRT Hellcat Funny Car, whose team is ready with a rebuilt car for the upcoming NHRA National event at Joliet, Illinois, on May 19-21. "It was very unfortunate what happened at Charlotte with Matt and the car going into the netting. But we had the backup car ready to go for the next round of qualifying. It had been a few years since that had happened to us back in Gainesville, but we went on to win that race. So, the backup is always ready."

And Venables' squad was prepared for a busy week following the Charlotte event as the team rebuilt the Dodge//SRT Hellcat for the next event on May 19-21 in Joliet, Illinois.

"The car was a mess with sand everywhere and the chassis being bent," said Venables. "It took us half a day for the cleanup of the car, and we then drove the chassis down the street for the repairs. Joe Fitzpatrick and Dan Murphy at Precision Built Race Cars were ready for us after a Saturday night phone call regarding the bent chassis. It's just down the street from the TSR shop and they began repairing the car immediately."

With the chassis in rebuild mode, Venables and crew continued their regular preparation work, including cylinder heads, clutch and engine building, for the next event.

"Luckily, we didn't have any damage with the engine and clutch," said Venables, the veteran crew chief who has led Hagan to multiple world championships. "Joe and Dan's group basically cut off the first eight feet of the chassis and

rebuilt the frame right by where Matt's feet are in the car.

"Everything is coming together very well. It was a tough weekend at Charlotte, but we have a very experienced crew, and they can handle these misfortunes very well. We have prepared all the parts for the new chassis, and I'm confident the car will be strong at Joliet."

Hagan also is confident in his team's preparation for Joliet despite the Charlotte incident.

"I'll take our guys against the other Funny Car teams in preparation after a mishap," said Hagan, the current NHRA Camping World Funny Car point leader. "Dickie and his boys are the best at coming back from adversity. We have been through a lot over the years, and I trust their experience giving me a strong car. Charlotte was a tough weekend, but I'm anxious for the Route 66 event. We'll be ready when qualifying opens on Friday."

Hagan currently holds a 58-point lead in the NHRA Camping World Funny Car standings entering the May 19-21 Gerber Collision and Glass Route 66 NHRA Nationals presented by PEAK Performance.

"It's been several years (since 2019) since we have raced at Joliet," said Venables. "But we have some excellent research from our past events at the track, and I think the rebuilt chassis will perform very well at that place. We will study the conditions for that track and be ready to roll this Friday when qualifying opens."

Action begins this Friday, May 19 at Route 66 Raceway with Nitro qualifying set for 6 p.m. CDT. Saturday's qualifying will take place at 2:35 p.m. CDT and 6 p.m. CDT with final eliminations scheduled for 11 a.m. CDT on Sunday, May 21. Television coverage of the Route 66 Raceway eliminations will be televised at 10 p.m. EDT on Fox Sports 1.

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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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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).

Fans can follow all the NHRA action this season at [DodgeGarage](#), the one-stop portal for Dodge//SRT and Mopar drag-racing news, including daily updates and access to an online racing HQ, news, events, galleries, available downloads and merchandise. Dodge is part of the portfolio of brands offered by leading global automaker and mobility provider [Stellantis](#) (NYSE: STLA).

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