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Stewart, Hagan Record Final Round Performances at Las Vegas NHRA Four-Wide Nationals in TSR Dodge//SRT Nitro Machines

- Tony Stewart, a Top Fuel "rookie," drove the Tony Stewart Racing (TSR) Rayce Rudeen Foundation Dodge//SRT dragster to his first professional final round Sunday at Las Vegas
- The NASCAR Hall of Fame racer, competing in his fourth Top Fuel event, advanced in the NHRA Four-Wide Nationals final round against Doug Kalitta, Justin Ashley and Steve Torrence
- Taking transfer positions in the first two rounds of competition, Stewart recorded his best times of the weekend Sunday at 3.773, 3.754 and 3.769 but lost to Kalitta in the final
- Matt Hagan, reigning NHRA Mission World Funny Car Champion, also advanced to the Four-Wide Nationals finals in his TSR Operation Healing Forces Dodge//SRT Hellcat Funny Car
- Hagan, who qualified tenth, recorded strong times Sunday in the Four-Wide eliminations with runs of 3.922, 3.938 and 3.895, the low Funny Car elapsed time of the event
- The defending race winner, Hagan suffered a final round loss with a triple 'holeshot' victory by Bob Tasca III over Austin Prock, Ron Capps and Hagan
- Team owner Stewart pleased with his Nitro teams' progress after a slow 2024 season start
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April 15, 2024, Auburn Hills, Mich. - Legendary racer Tony Stewart continues to rewrite his historic motorsports career each week in the NHRA Mission Drag Racing Series by driving the Tony Stewart Racing (TSR) Rayce Rudeen Foundation Dodge//SRT Top Fuel dragster to his first professional final round appearance Sunday in the NHRA Four-Wide Nationals at the Strip at Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

Stewart, in just his fourth Top Fuel race, was quick off the starting line and quick on the track by advancing in two rounds of competition to the delight of the huge crowd who rooted him on throughout the weekend, and he took on veteran competitors Doug Kalitta, Justin Ashley and Steve Torrence in the Top Fuel final round.

Stewart was impressive with quick reaction times and solid runs of 3.773, 3.754 and 3.769 before losing the final to Kalitta's 3.715. The final round appearance vaulted Stewart into the sixth position in the current NHRA Mission Top Fuel points standings as the NHRA tour travels to zMAX Dragway, outside of Charlotte, on April 26-28.

Despite qualifying eleventh in the Top Fuel field, Stewart proved to be impressive with a transfer spot in round one and a victory in round two. In the final round, the Indiana Motorsports Hall of Famer clicked a quick 0.050 second reaction time but Kalitta's 3.715 took the victory.

"I'm proud of the progress this team is making right now," said Stewart after his final round appearance. "We didn't qualify as well as we wanted, but, with the Four-Wide format, I don't feel it is that important for eliminations. We transferred in the first quad (four cars) round and then, we outright won the next round and that makes us feel like we are gaining on it. I told the team that we are way ahead of where we were last week at Phoenix. And that was way ahead of the runs at Gainesville and Pomona.

"I feel like the team is doing a great job improving with each race, and we are in the window that we can make some small adjustments and pick up speed. We will focus on the positive moving forward. Today (Sunday), I was leaving on good lights and got a 50 (.050 of a second) in the final. I wanted to be consistent on the lights, and that is the best for me as a rookie driver in Top Fuel. I'm looking forward to Charlotte now."

Reigning NHRA Mission World Funny Car Champion Matt Hagan matched his teammate's Las Vegas performance Sunday by piloting his TSR Operation Healing Forces Dodge//SRT Hellcat Funny Car to the final round as he was seeking a repeat win in the Four-Wide Nationals and his sixth Las Vegas victory.

After qualifying an uncharacteristic tenth on Friday, Hagan bounced back in the Funny Car eliminations with impressive runs of 3.922, 3.938 and 3.895, the low Funny Car elapsed time of the event in warm track conditions. The Virginia driver transferred in each of the first two quad rounds and took on contenders Bob Tasca III, Austin Prock and Ron Capps in the final round.

Despite recording the low E.T. of the race, Hagan lost in a triple 'holeshot' win by Tasca over Prock, Capps and Hagan. By advancing to the final round, Hagan remains in fourth in the NHRA Mission Funny Car points standings after four races in the 20-event NHRA national circuit.

"Dickie (Venables, crew chief) is always a great racer on Sunday with this team," said Hagan. "The TSR team put a great racecar under me today and we would have liked to put the Operation Healing Forces (OHF) car in the winner's circle with the Nellis Air Force base next to the track. We had a lot of stuff going on with the engine's bellhousing and we made some big wholesale changes. And we are making progress now. We are getting our racecar back to where we want it. After a couple of races being down a bit, we can run some good numbers now.

"It's tough when you get beat on a 'holeshot' but those four cars in the final were about a foot or 18 inches apart. That's some darn good racing. We are happy to be a part of those big 'heavy hitters' in the class. You never see the other cars when it's that close, but you can hear them. Now we want to get this Dodge//SRT racecar more dialed in as we go to Charlotte in two weeks."

Hagan, the four-time NHRA Mission Funny Car World Champion, is no stranger to the zMAX Dragway winner's circle with victories in 2011, 2013 and 2014; and Stewart, making his first Top Fuel appearance in Charlotte, won the NASCAR Sprint Cup race in 2003 at the 1.5-mile oval, next to zMAX Dragway.

The next NHRA Mission Drag Racing Series event in Charlotte is the Nitro qualifying rounds at the NHRA 4-Wide Nationals scheduled for Friday, April 26, at 5:15 p.m. and 7:45 p.m. EDT. Saturday's Nitro qualifying sessions are set for 12:45 p.m. and 3 p.m. EDT. Sunday's 4-Wide Nationals final eliminations at the Strip will begin at 12 p.m. EDT. The final eliminations will be televised on Sunday, April 28, at 6 p.m. EDT on Fox Sports 1.

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Dodge//SRT

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