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Hagan Takes Back-to-Back Wins in TSR Direct Connection Dodge//SRT Hellcat Funny Car in Tough Track Conditions at NHRA Route 66 Nationals

- Matt Hagan drove his Tony Stewart Racing (TSR) Direct Connection Dodge//SRT Hellcat Funny Car to a second consecutive NHRA Mission national event win Sunday in Route 66 Nationals
- Qualifying 11th in the 16-car Funny Car field, Hagan, the reigning NHRA Mission World Funny Car Champion, fought very tough track conditions all weekend at Route 66 Raceway
- The victory for Hagan was his second straight NHRA Mission win after taking the Four-Wide Nationals last month in Charlotte and the 51st of his drag racing career
- The four-time NHRA Mission World Funny Car Champion defeated Ron Capps, Paul Lee, Blake Alexander and legendary John Force, with a 3.998 to Force's 4.096 in the final round
- The win moved Hagan into the NHRA Mission Funny Car points lead as the Virginia driver seeks his fifth NHRA World title and second with Tony Stewart Racing
- The 3.998 run was his only sub-four-second pass the entire weekend as the TSR Dodge//SRT team battled hot and humid Chicago area weather at the state-of-the-art drag racing facility
- NASCAR Hall of Famer Tony Stewart drove his TSR Direct Connection Dodge//SRT Top Fuel dragster to a first-round loss after facing a tricky track surface in the 11,000-horsepower dragster
- Stewart, in his sixth NHRA Top Fuel race, qualified 16th and gave No. 1 qualifier T.J. Zizzo a good challenge in the first round before getting nipped at the finish line
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May 20, 2024, Auburn Hills, Mich. - Matt Hagan just shook his head when he jumped from his 11,000-horsepower, nitro-burning Tony Stewart Racing (TSR) Direct Connection Dodge//SRT Hellcat Funny Car Sunday in the NHRA Gerber Collision & Glass Route 66 Nationals drag races near Chicago. Hagan was sitting in victory lane, never thinking he would be there after battling tough racing conditions during the weekend.

Hagan, the four-time NHRA Mission World Champion, scored his second consecutive NHRA Funny Car national event win after overcoming tricky track conditions during Friday and Saturday qualifying rounds. Hagan, who won the NHRA Four-Wide Nationals last month in Charlotte, qualified only 11th in the 16-car Funny Car field, tackling hot and humid weather in the Chicago area.

But the Virginia racer and his TSR Dodge//SRT crew made the proper adjustments throughout race day Sunday to record his 51st career NHRA national win and defeat legendary John Force in the final round with a 3.998 over Force's 4.096 in front of a large crowd at the Joliet, Ill., racing plant.

Hagan's second 2024 NHRA triumph moved him into the NHRA Mission Funny Car points lead with 488 markers over Austin Prock at 474. Hagan seeks his third straight NHRA win at the next NHRA Mission event at Epping, N.H., on May 31-June 2 in the New England Nationals. Hagan is a four-time winner at Epping as well.

On Sunday, Hagan recorded wins over former NHRA World Champion Ron Capps, Paul Lee and Blake Alexander before facing Force in the final round. Fighting the tough track surface throughout the weekend, Hagan's 3.998 was the only time during the event that he bettered the four-second clocking, but the Dickie Venables-tuned Direct Connection Dodge//SRT Hellcat improved with each round and saved his best run for the finale.

"It was a massive day for TSR (Tony Stewart Racing) and the Direct Connection Dodge//SRT guys," said Hagan in

victory lane. "Back-to-back wins is super in very tough track conditions this weekend. This place was so tricky with the heat and humidity. We got stuck in the tough lane and we drove it to another win. Dickie Venables, Mike Knudsen, Alex Conaway and all of the crew guys do such a great job on race day. I trust them to put me in position to win races. I just stab the throttle and steer it. I had to drive the wheels off the car today.

"I wouldn't have believed we could have won on Saturday. But Tony (Stewart) gives me the best equipment I could ask for in NHRA competition. We didn't qualify as well as we wanted with an 11th spot, but, on race day, we clicked those win lights and that is what it is all about. Getting those four 'win' lights is why we do this. I feel like if you are in it, you can win it. Racing and beating John Force is an honor. He is the GOAT. So, I feel tremendous when you beat the best ever. I'm always excited to win a 'Wally' trophy and now it was my 51st career win. I'm so grateful to race these cars and drive for Dodge and Tony Stewart Racing."

Team owner Stewart was very happy in the NHRA winner's circle after Hagan's second 2024 win.

"Matt and the team did a great job in the Direct Connection Dodge//SRT machine today," said Stewart. "He had a big moment in E1 (first round of eliminations) where he crossed the centerline after the finish. That was a big moment, but this team knows how to race all day. Race day is their day! I'm really proud of these guys and, of course, Matt. Matt did a super job today."

Stewart, the NASCAR Hall of Fame driver and Top Fuel rookie, competed in his sixth NHRA nitro event at Route 66 Raceway, and he and his TSR Direct Connection Dodge//SRT team also suffered the tough track surface throughout the weekend. A winner at the nearby Chicagoland Speedway in NASCAR and USAC competition, Stewart qualified 16th and had to face No. 1 qualifier T.J. Zizzo in the first round. In a close race, Stewart lost to Zizzo.

The difficult conditions at Route 66 Raceway saw several favorites miss Sunday's eliminations, including former NHRA World Champion Brittany Force, who had previously qualified for 187 straight NHRA national races.

"It was the polar opposite of what you normally see in racing this weekend," Stewart said. "It's the nature of nitro motors. Nitro motors want to be under load. It's not as easy as backing down a couple of knobs off and softening everything. You soften it too much and it puts a hole out (of the cylinder). On weekends like this, the crew chiefs are balancing everything on a razor blade. You want to keep the load in the engine to make it happy but then soften things enough to not overpower the track.

"It was just a challenging weekend. Unfortunately, the one run we needed to get right (Friday night), we stubbed our toe. It backed us in a corner for Q3 and Q4 on Saturday. And that put us in a tough round one matchup today. But we'll be ready for Epping. We'll test this week and I know there are things that co-crew chiefs Neal (Strausbaugh) and Mike (Domagala) want to try and get us where we need to be. So, we can sort out some things as we head into the June races."

Nitro action gets underway at the New England Nationals on Friday, May 31, with two qualifying sessions set for 5:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. EDT, with two qualifying rounds scheduled at 12:30 p.m. and 3 p.m. EDT on Saturday. Sunday's final eliminations will begin on Sunday, June 2, at 11 a.m. EDT. Fox Sports 1 will televise the final eliminations on Sunday, June 2, at 1 p.m. EDT and 7 p.m. EDT.

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The next-generation Dodge Charger electrifies a legend, with the Charger retaining its title as the world's quickest

and most powerful muscle car led by the all-new, all-electric 2025 Dodge Charger Daytona Scat Pack. The all-new Dodge Charger will also offer performance choices via multi-energy powertrain options including the 550-horsepower Dodge Charger SIXPACK H.O., powered by the 3.0L Twin Turbo Hurricane High Output engine.

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