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Hagan Advances to Funny Car Semifinals While Stewart Exits Early in Top Fuel at 'Tricky' Track for NHRA Thunder Valley Nationals

- Fighting heat, humidity and a "tricky" track, Tony Stewart Racing (TSR) Nitro drivers Matt Hagan and Tony Stewart battled more than their competitors in NHRA Thunder Valley Nationals
- Hagan, the 2023 NHRA World Funny Car Champion, fought off the elements and his rivals to advance to semifinals in his TSR Johnson's Horsepowered Garage Dodge//SRT Hellcat
- Qualifying in a rare 12th spot in the 15-car field, popular Virginia racer Hagan defeated Chad Green and Bob Tasca III in rounds one and two
- In the semis, Hagan posted a 4.096 to top qualifier Austin Prock's winning 3.982 as the Dodge//SRT driver fought a slippery track surface
- Hagan's semifinal appearance moves him to fourth in the NHRA Mission Funny Car points as the TSR team now prepares for upcoming NHRA Virginia Nationals on June 21-23
- For Hagan's teammate, NASCAR Hall of Famer Tony Stewart, the Bristol Dragway racing surface and weather conditions did not match up well for his TSR Dodge//SRT Top Fuel car
- Stewart's dragster lost traction at mid-track after his strong starting line reaction time and "Smoke" suffered a first-round loss to Doug Foley
- Stewart currently ranks ninth in the NHRA Mission Top Fuel points standings after eight races
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June 10, 2024, Auburn Hills, Mich. - The "tricky" track conditions this weekend at Bristol Dragway proved to be the talk of the pit area at the NHRA Super Grip Thunder Valley Nationals, and the crews of Tony Stewart Racing (TSR) Nitro operation tried their best to adjust as quickly as possible.

The heat, humidity and a slippery surface due to a race day "oil down" kept all of the nitro teams on their toes through two days of qualifying and final eliminations Sunday. Thunder Valley and the weather conditions have always made for a tough setting at the annual NHRA national event in June.

Matt Hagan, the reigning NHRA Mission World Funny Car Champion, and his Dickie Venables-led TSR Dodge//SRT team were very consistent throughout the three-day meet to advance to the semifinals with the TSR Johnson's Horsepowered Garage Dodge//SRT Hellcat machine. In qualifying, Hagan scored times of 4.125, 4.136, 4.140 and 4.134 on the delicate pavement and powered to an impressive 3.951 in the cooler Sunday morning eliminations over Chad Green.

In round two, Hagan put in a spectacular 0.041-second reaction time in defeating Bob Tasca III with a 4.126 to Tasca's 7.292. Unfortunately, leading into the semifinals, a previous competitor suffered mechanical issues, with their race car scattering oil for some 300 feet in the left lane, which Hagan was forced to compete against the top qualifier, young Austin Prock. Hagan posted a solid 4.096 that came up short to eventual Funny Car race winner Prock's 3.982.

Despite the semifinals defeat, Hagan sits fourth in the current NHRA Mission Funny Car points standings after eight races as the NHRA national circuit heads to the Virginia Nationals in Dinwiddie, Virginia, on June 22-23.

"It was a tricky weekend with a tricky racetrack," said Hagan. "To see Dickie (Venables – crew chief) navigate it the way he did, I was pretty impressed. Obviously, lane choice was a big thing out there. We didn't have it in the

semifinals. There was a car in a different class that had an oil-down before we ran in the left lane, so that was really tough. NHRA did a great job getting the lane ready to go, but we had to pull everything back with the engine and hope for the best. They (Austin Prock) ran strong beside us. Overall, I feel we had a pretty good weekend with a tricky track. We'll get ready for Richmond and look to put our Dodge//SRT Hellcat back in the winner's circle."

Team owner Tony Stewart and his TSR Johnson's Horsepowered Garage Dodge//SRT Top Fuel vehicle didn't enjoy a good weekend with various traction issues at the tricky racing surface, but the Indiana driver did put in a solid 3.829 qualifying effort on Friday to place him in the top half of the 16-car starting field.

However, despite a quick reaction time off the starting line, Stewart's nitro-burning machine lost traction in first-round eliminations Sunday, failing to advance against Doug Foley.

"Moral of the story, it was just a frustrating weekend, honestly," said Stewart, the former champion in NASCAR, IndyCar and USAC. "Track conditions were tough. We are getting into the summer months, where we are going to have hot and challenging racetracks. I felt really good leaving Epping (N.H.) last weekend and was excited about coming here. We never really got the Johnson's Horsepowered Garage Dodge//SRT car in a happy place, where we felt like we could start pressing and moving the needle with our dragster.

"We are struggling to find what this car wants right now. It is frustrating for all of us, especially Neal (Strausbaugh – crew chief), Mike (Domagala – co-crew chief) and Ryan (McGilvry – car chief). It's tough for the whole team, myself included. We just have to put it behind us. All we can do is focus on Richmond in a couple of weeks, then Norwalk and the Western swing. We will keep our heads to the ground and keep grinding away at it."

The qualifying sessions at the NHRA Virginia Nationals will be unique with all three rounds set for Saturday (June 22) at 12 p.m., 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. EDT. Sunday's final eliminations will take place on Sunday at 12 p.m. EDT. Fox Sports 1 will televise Sunday's NHRA Virginia Nationals eliminations at 5 p.m. EDT on Sunday (June 23).

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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 Mission 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

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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 2024 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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