

HEMI-Powered Runner-Up Finish for Gaines at NHRA Sonoma Nationals

- V. Gaines drove his HEMI-powered Dodge Dart to a 17th career Pro Stock final round elimination at the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Sonoma Nationals
- Matt Hagan takes 50th anniversary HEMI® tribute Mopar to a semifinal appearance at Sonoma Raceway
- Semifinal appearance assures Jeg Coughlin Jr. of a Pro Stock playoff berth alongside Mopar teammate Allen Johnson

July 27, 2014, Sonoma, California - Mopar Pro Stock pilot V. Gaines drove his HEMI®-powered Dodge Dart from a ninth place qualifying spot to a runner-up finish at the 27th annual National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Sonoma Nationals marking a 17th career final round appearance for the Kendall Western Motorsports entry and a third this season. Gaines' final elimination face-off against competitor and title winner Jason Line was a rematch of their 2006 meeting at Sonoma Raceway which had a similar result.

It was a strong effort by Gaines as he posted an elapsed time pass of 6.564 seconds at 211.30 miles per hour (.063 reaction time) falling short to Line's 6.548 sec / 211.73 mph (.054 reaction time). After starting the season with back-to-back runner-up finishes, this third one helped break an unfortunate streak of six events marred by first round losses and one in which he failed to qualify. It also helped Gaines move up a spot in the Pro Stock points standings to eighth place with three events left to determine which top-ten drivers will make the NHRA "Countdown to the Championship".

Gaines was first to the finish line in the opening round against Chris McGaha and then turned on the win lights against the No.1 qualifier Shane Gray who also had traction issues. It was an all-HEMI showdown in the semifinal round between Gaines' and reigning NHRA Pro Stock champion Jeg Coughlin Jr., with the Kendall Dodge Dart taking advantage of loss of traction by the JEGS.com Dodge Dart to advance to the final.

Coughlin made it to the semifinal match-up against Gaines by first running down the Dodge Avenger of Deric Kramer after recovering from a late start with a .173 reaction time to run a 6.527-second lap. He then posted a .048 reaction time and 6.558 second (212.23 mph) elapsed time run to give him the win light in a close drag race against Greg Anderson's .050 second reaction time and an e.t. of 6.563 seconds /211.73 mph in the second round to face Gaines.

"I had a good jump on V (Gaines) at the start line but I would have never guessed my car would strike the tires and react the way it did," Coughlin said. "I tried to efficiently navigate it in order to calm it down and get it through the gears, but about that time I saw V on my right and knew it was over. We had great cars this weekend coming into game day today but we were just a little off. If we can take this result and turn it into something even more positive as we trek down the road and into the Countdown, then that's going to win us rounds, win us races, and hopefully another championship."

While Coughlin drops a position in the standings behind event winner Line by just one point, the Mopar driver's semifinal appearance helped assure his playoff berth.

Meanwhile, last weekend's winner at the Mopar Mile High Nationals, Allen Johnson put his "Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart third on the eliminations ladder and in doing so clinched his playoff ticket following qualifications. Johnson advanced to the second round of Sunday's eliminations with a win over Tommy Lee who had red light start, but as the track heated up and conditions changed, things didn't go quite as planned in the following match-up against Dave Connolly when the Dodge Dart lost traction off the start.

"We had great HEMI horsepower and an "iffy" track but didn't manage it correctly," said Johnson who remains

second in the standings. "Neither Jeg or I adapted to the change in conditions as well as others did. I think out of the last six pairs, three or four of them shook their tires but that's not an excuse. For the most part it was a pretty decent showing for our camp so we'll take what we learned here and go to Seattle and hopefully be able to correct it."

From his fifth place Funny Car qualifying position, Mopar Express Lane driver Matt Hagan drove to a third semifinal appearance this season by disposing of Tony Pedregon and Tim Wilkerson to meet up with eventual Sonoma Nationals title winner Courtney Force. The Don Schumacher Racing driver saw his 50th anniversary HEMI tribute Dodge Charger R/T lose traction against Force but felt satisfied with the efforts his Mopar team put in to get to the semifinals.

"It was a good race for us this weekend," said Hagan who remains seventh in Funny Car point standings. "We were solid in qualifying that gave us some good data coming into race day and that got us some round wins. We were just pushing it a little too hard there in the semifinal and that's what you have to do out here because competition is so darn tough. We'll go on to Seattle where we won last year and try to repeat. That's our goal."

DSR teammate Tommy Johnson Jr. advanced from his opening round battle against points leader Robert Hight only to smoke the tires of his Dodge Charger R/T against his second round adversary, John Force. The Make-A-Wish Mopar dropped a position in the standings to fifth place, just three markers behind Sonoma title winner Courtney Force and less than 20 behind teammate Ron Capps in third place.

Top DSR qualifier, Jack Beckman, was seeded fourth for his first round match-up against Tim Wilkerson with whom he has been battling for the tenth and final playoff spot in the Funny Car standings for a number of weeks. Beckman saw his Dodge Charger R/T haze the tires against Wilkerson, putting him back into the 11th spot with three events left to make the playoffs.

Capps, who was the defending winner at Sonoma, also saw his day come to a premature end as his DSR Mopar lost traction in the opening round against Alexis DeJoria but remains third in the standings.

Following the Mopar Mile-High Nationals in Denver and this weekend's Sonoma Nationals in California, the Mopar team now prepares for the final leg of the three event NHRA western swing on Aug. 1-3 at Pacific Raceways for the 27th annual Northwest Nationals near Seattle, Washington.

2014 NHRA Points Standings **(Following the NHRA Sonoma Nationals Race Final)**

PRO STOCK (season wins in parentheses)

1. Erica Enders-Stevens – 1229* (4)
2. **Allen Johnson – Dodge Dart – 1107* (4)**
3. Jason Line – 1074 * (1)
4. **Jeg Coughlin Jr. – Dodge Dart – 1073* (2)**
5. Dave Connolly – 1023* (1)
6. Shane Gray – 911
7. Vincent Nobile – 931 (1)
8. V. Gaines – Dodge Dart – 628
9. Chris McGaha – 686
10. Jonathan Gray – 548

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. Robert Hight – 1216* (5)
2. John Force – 1097* (2)
3. **Ron Capps – Dodge Charger R/T – 957 (1)**
4. Courtney Force – 941 (2)
5. **Tommy Johnson Jr. – Dodge Charger R/T – 938 (1)**
6. Alexis DeJoria – 883 (2)
7. **Matt Hagan – Dodge Charger R/T – 868 (1)**

8. Cruz Pedregon – 840 (1)
9. Del Worsham – 816
10. Tim Wilkerson – 762
11. **Jack Beckman – Dodge Charger R/T – 743**

****clinched a “Countdown to the Championship” playoff berth***

About Mopar Motorsports

Mopar’s commitment to professional motorsports competition was established in the 1950s when a partnership ignited with drag racing pioneer Don Garlits, resulting in the breaking of numerous speed and performance barriers in HEMI®-powered vehicles over the next several decades. In 2014, Mopar celebrates the 50th anniversary of the introduction of the GEN III 426 Race HEMI® and looks to defend back-to-back NHRA World Championship titles (2012-2013) in the Pro Stock class and battle for another Funny Car World Championship after wins in 2011-2012. While Mopar remains involved in a various professional motorsports series, it continues to honour its roots by being a proud supporter of amateur racing within the NHRA with its sponsorship of the HEMI Challenge and Mopar Sportsman Cup.

Mopar Brand

Mopar (a simple contraction of the words Motor and PARTs) was trademarked in 1937 with the launch of an antifreeze product but truly made its mark in the 1960s during the muscle-car era. From Mopar Performance Parts to enhance speed and handling for both road and racing use, the brand soon expanded to include technical service and customer support.

Today, Mopar is FCA’s service, parts and customer-care brand and distributes more than 500,000 parts and accessories in more than 130 markets, integrating service, parts and customer-care operations in order to enhance dealer and customer support worldwide. Mopar is the source for genuine parts and accessories for FCA brands.

Mopar parts are unique in that they are engineered with the same teams that create factory-authorized vehicle specifications for FCA vehicles – a direct connection that no other aftermarket parts company can provide. A complete list of Mopar accessories and performance parts is available at www.mopar.com.

Mopar-first Features

Mopar has introduced numerous industry-first features including:

- **Vehicle-information apps:** first to introduce smartphone vehicle-information applications, a new channel of communication with customers
- **Electronic owner manuals:** first to introduce traditional owner manuals in a DVD and brief user-guide format. First to offer complete vehicle-information kits in Spanish
- **Wi-Fi:** first to offer customers the ability to make their vehicle a wireless hot spot
- **Wireless charging:** first to introduce in-vehicle wireless charging for portable devices
- **Electronic Vehicle Tracking System (EVTS):** first to market with interactive vehicle tracking device that sends owner a text when vehicle is driven too fast or too far based on pre-set parameters
- **wiAdvisor:** first to provide factory-connected tablet technology in the service lane for instant vehicle diagnosis
- **wiTech:** first to support vehicle diagnosis and software updates leveraging off-the-shelf personal computers and a dedicated wireless tool network
- **2011 Mopar Challenger Drag Pak:** first to introduce a 500-plus cubic-inch V-10 drag-race package car

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