

Johnson Nabs No.1 Pro Stock Qualifier at Lucas Oil NHRA Nationals; Three DSR Mopar Funny Cars Seeded in Top-4 for Eliminations

- Allen Johnson retains top spot to give Dodge Dart No.1 Pro Stock Qualifier spot at 33rd annual Lucas Oil NHRA Nationals
- Johnson earns his first pole position at Brainerd International Raceway and his fifth of the season
- Three Don Schumacher Racing Mopars in the top-4 spots on the Funny Car eliminations ladder with Ron Capps, Matt Hagan and Tommy Johnson Jr.
- Defending title winner Capps starts second, while last year's runner-up finisher Hagan is seeded third
- Both Capps and Johnson Jr. clinch Funny Car playoff spots

August 16, 2014, Brainerd, Minnesota - Pro Stock driver Allen Johnson drove his "Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart to his first No. 1 qualifier position at Brainerd International Raceway in the hopes of earning his first title win at the 33rd annual Lucas Oil National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Nationals on Sunday, while Don Schumacher Racing claimed three of the top four spots in Funny Car qualifying.

Johnson earned the top spot on the ladder for eliminations for the fifth time this season and a 36th time in his career with his elapsed time run posted in the second qualifying session on Friday with a 6.614-second (207.98 mph) pass. Johnson picked up two more bonus points on his final qualifying run, for a total of seven, by posting his second quickest pass of the weekend at 6.638 seconds /207.18 mile per hour. That came after his first qualifying attempt didn't quite go as planned as the Mopar crew pulled the Dodge Dart from the start line when something didn't feel right to the driver.

"We had a spark plug decide it wanted to crack and quit working during the burnout so instead of wasting some parts we decided to sit that one out," said Johnson who will have a bye in the first round of eliminations. "I had a great car all weekend and the new Dodge Dart really likes this surface at Brainerd. It's our best start here and I think we have a good game plan for tomorrow. That last run was pretty nice. Having a good shot at the track first round, without any way to lose it, will pay dividends because we can get after it a little more than we normally would if there was a car in the other lane. That will tell us how far we can push it."

Reigning NHRA Pro Stock Champion Jeg Coughlin Jr. has advanced to five final elimination rounds at this event and will have his JEGS.com Mopar Dodge Dart seeded fifth based on its best lap in the third qualifying session with an elapsed time run of 6.636 seconds at 207.91 mph.

"Two days in the books here in Brainerd and we've found ourselves to have a very consistent racecar which is always a good thing," said Coughlin who will have Larry Morgan as his first round opponent. "The air wasn't as good today as it was Friday so we didn't see big improvements but we were working on fine-tuning things for game day tomorrow. We'll go over the data and zero in on a tune-up that should agree with the slightly cooler temperatures and better atmospheric conditions we're forecasted to have Sunday. We'll see if Mother Nature will take some of this thickness and moisture out of the air."

"We're looking for big things tomorrow," added Coughlin who is looking for his fifth win at the Minnesota venue and his third of the season. "If we can get some round wins early and get into those later rounds then I think we could walk away with another trophy. That's certainly the game plan for us."

Fellow HEMI-powered driver V. Gaines, who finished runner-up at last year's event, will start the elimination rounds from the tenth spot based on his 6.669 second (207.98 mph) e.t. and will face off against Shane Gray in the opening

round. Deric Kramer (6.756 /205.01) was 13th overall on the timing sheets and will lineup his Dodge Avenger against Greg Anderson.

The final Funny Car qualifying session was interrupted for 80 minutes by a light drizzle, cooling off the track considerably for the remaining 11 cars and providing the perfect conditions to lower the times and the opportunity to steal the No.1 qualifier position.

Prior to the rain delay, the Don Schumacher Racing Mopars of Matt Hagan, Ron Capps and Tommy Johnson Jr. respectively had topped the timing sheets in the third qualifying session and were looking to raise their game for the final shot at a no. 1 seeding for eliminations.

Once rain subsided and qualifying resumed, DSR drivers ran the three quickest times with the Dodge Charger R/T of Capps (4.064/314.17) just ahead of the Mopar Express Lane machine of Hagan (4.068/311.99) and the Make-A-Wish Mopar of Johnson Jr. (4.078/309.27) rounding out the top-3, before 16-time NHRA champ John Force's elapsed time run of 4.060/315.27 dislodged everyone to take his 151st No.1 qualifier position.

The four-time and defending title winner at Brainerd, Capps qualified second for a first round match-up against the Dodge Charger R/T of Jeff Arend, and in doing so, clinched a spot in the NHRA "Countdown to the Championship".

"Anytime you put your name on the board at the top end that shows you have clinched a spot in the Countdown, I don't care if it's No. 3 or No. 10, it's big," said Capps who currently sits third in the points standings. "This championship can be won from any of those 10 positions. We're in a position to be third and sometimes you look around and are so involved in what's going on, that you don't realize that you've had a pretty good season."

Seeded third for a second consecutive event, Hagan, who finished runner-up to Capps at last year's event, will lineup his Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T against Chad Head for the opening round and is hoping for a strong result to make up some valuable points before the Countdown begins.

"(Crew Chief) Dickie (Venables) and Knute (assistant crew chief Mike Knudsen) are doing a great job," said Hagan who is seventh in the standings but is just 40 points from his Mopar teammate Capps in third place. "We're peaking at the right time and I just have a ton of confidence in my guys. I'm really excited for race day here in Brainerd and to keep that momentum going into Indy and the Countdown."

Also securing a spot in the playoffs by qualifying was Johnson Jr. whose fourth place seeding will provide Tim Wilkerson as his first opponent on Sunday. With his qualifying efforts, Johnson added two bonus points to his fifth place tally in the standings.

Still working hard to crack into the top-10 in points with just two events left to make the playoffs, Jack Beckman used his last run to improve his time to 4.115 second (309.70 mph) but wasn't able to improve his tenth place seeding and will face Cruz Pedregon in the first round of eliminations.

Two hours of qualifying highlights from the 33rd annual Lucas Oil NHRA Nationals, the 17th of 24 events on the NHRA Mello Yellow Drag Racing series schedule, will be broadcast on ESPN2 tonight, August 16, starting at 11 p.m. (ET). Three hours of elimination round coverage will air on ESPN2 on Sunday, Aug. 17, starting at 9 p.m. (ET).

2014 NHRA Points Standings **(Following the Lucas Oil NHRA Nationals Final Qualifying)**

PRO STOCK (season wins in parentheses)

1. Erica Enders-Stevens – 1269* (4)
2. **Allen Johnson – Dodge Dart – 1242* (4)**
3. Jason Line – 1238* (1)
4. **Jeg Coughlin Jr. – Dodge Dart – 1162* (2)**
5. Dave Connolly – 1110* (1)
6. Shane Gray – 1048*

7. Vincent Nobile – 992* (1)
8. V. Gaines – Dodge Dart – 774
9. Chris McGaha – 750
10. Greg Anderson – 685

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. Robert Hight – 1308* (5)
2. John Force – 1266* (2)
3. **Ron Capps – Dodge Charger R/T – 1030 (1)**
4. Courtney Force – 1015 (2)
5. **Tommy Johnson Jr. – Dodge Charger R/T – 1012 (1)**
6. Alexis DeJoria – 995 (2)
7. **Matt Hagan – Dodge Charger R/T – 989 (1)**
8. Cruz Pedregon – 929 (1)
9. Del Worsham – 880
10. Tim Wilkerson – 848
11. **Jack Beckman – Dodge Charger R/T – 812**

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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