

Semifinal Finish by Mopar Driver Tommy Johnson Jr. at Texas NHRA FallNationals Funny Car Eliminations

- Semifinal performance by Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) Mopar Funny Car driver Tommy Johnson Jr. at AAA Texas NHRA FallNationals at Texas Motorplex
- Matt Hagan is top Mopar in the NHRA "Countdown to the Championship" after two of six playoffs event in the battle for the Funny Car world title
- No.2 seed in Pro Stock eliminations, Allen Johnson drove his Magneti Marelli/ Mopar Dodge Dart to quarterfinals at FallNationals eliminations

September 21, 2014, Ennis, Texas - The second of six National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) "Countdown to the Championship" playoff events took place this weekend at Texas Motorplex near Dallas, Texas, with Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) driver Tommy Johnson Jr. carrying the Mopar banner through to the semifinals in the Funny Car eliminations.

After a strong qualifying effort put the Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T fourth on the eliminations ladder, Johnson made his way past Cruz Pedregon, who fouled out with a red-light start, to be paired up with Funny Car points leader John Force in the quarterfinals. Johnson won that match-up with a 4.192 elapsed time run at 302.08 mile per hour that was unchallenged by Force who hazed his tires on his pass.

That set up a semifinal showdown between the HEMI-powered DSR driver and Courtney Force, but Johnson's 4.254/268.54 run was not quite enough to beat the eventual FallNationals title winner's 4.218/299.06 run. Force went on to beat Del Worsham in the final elimination to win her third race of the season.

While Johnson had hoped to emulate the success his DSR teammate Matt Hagan had just 24 hours earlier in the rescheduled NHRA Carolina Nationals with a title victory at Texas Motorplex, his semifinal appearance put him seventh in the standings with four playoff events remaining and kept his hopes to challenge for the Funny Car championship very much alive.

"It was a good points day," said Johnson who sits 96 points or less than five rounds from first place. "After going out first round of Charlotte, it was nice to go some rounds. It definitely gives you a confidence boost knowing you're still in the hunt. We just need to buckle down and do better. We just need to keep going rounds."

Leading the DSR team in the championship hunt is Hagan who sits in third place, 49 points behind from the top spot. Seeded sixth after qualifying, the Mopar driver defeated Bob Tasca III in the opening round to meet up with Tim Wilkerson. While Hagan's Dodge Charger R/T fell short of advancing to the next round after losing traction, he couldn't be disappointed with his team's efforts throughout the weekend.

"We just pushed it a little hard and it didn't stick," Hagan said. "Yesterday was a great day. We had a great weekend overall. You can afford a second-round loss after going rounds and getting the (Carolina Nationals) win (on Saturday). We made a lot of headway. We are leaving here a lot stronger than we came here so we'll just keep moving forward to St. Louis next weekend."

Ron Capps, who was the top DSR qualifier going into the FallNationals when he put his Dodge Charger R/T in the No.3 spot, was upset in the first round by Wilkerson. Capps (4.223/295.72) led early in a close drag race that was won by his opponent (4.173/304.25) with half a car-length advantage at the stripe.

Mopar teammate Jack Beckman has had strong qualifying runs as of late in his Dodge Charger R/T. Unfortunately those haven't translated well to eliminations and he endured his 11th first round loss of the year on Sunday after

losing traction against Robert Hight who added insult to injury when he crossed the finish line with the worst winning time (4.501/271.57) of Sunday's Funny Car eliminations.

In Pro Stock competition, the No.2 qualifier for eliminations Allen Johnson saw his "Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart endure some initial tire chatter in his first round win over fellow HEMI-powered Matt Hartford to advance to a quarterfinal pairing against Dave Connolly. After some solid qualifying runs had Johnson and the Mopar team feeling confident about making strides in the Countdown, their efforts came to a premature end with a .041-second reaction time and a 6.607-second e.t. with the top speed of the round at 210.47 mph in a second round loss to Connolly's .005-second light and 6.603/209.33 run. Connolly went on to win the Fall Nationals title by defeating Shane Gray in the final.

"We really have a package now, with both Mopar team cars actually, to work on," Johnson said. "I didn't feel that way coming into this weekend but the last three runs we were the fastest cars. I gave up a little on that last one but a .005 light (reaction time by his opponent) was going to be hard to beat. I really feel confident going forward into the next three or four races. We should be the two fastest cars and be able to go win some races."

Johnson's quarterfinal appearance followed a first round loss in the first playoff race. Those results unfortunately dropped him to seventh place in the standings just ahead of teammate Jeg Coughlin Jr. and fellow Dodge driver V. Gaines. However, the good news for the HEMI-powered contingent is that their competitors atop the Countdown points heading into the weekend, Erica Enders Stevens and Jason Line, also lost their quarterfinal match-ups allowing the Pro Stock battle to tighten up.

"As close as the competition is in Pro Stock and these playoffs, even with the setbacks we've had in the first two Countdown eliminations, it's not out of reach by any means," Johnson said. "We just have to go to St. Louis and win the race."

Coughlin echoed his teammates sentiments after seeing his day shortened due to a transmission break in the first round against Greg Anderson.

"Not quite the weekend we had drawn up," said the JEGS.com Mopar driver. "Here in Dallas, with the finishing up of the Charlotte race and then rolling into this event, we had high hopes. The car just wasn't where we needed it to be. Probably our best run was in Q4, which gave us a ton of confidence going into today. It just didn't work out this time."

"We've got four races left, so we'll certainly make a strong effort," said Coughlin who sits eighth in points. "The whole team is extremely capable. It just wasn't in the cards, as you say, so we'll move on to St. Louis next weekend."

V. Gaines also saw his day come to a premature end with a first round loss to Jonathan Gray.

Mopar teams now pack up and head to the third stop of the six-event NHRA "Countdown to the Championship" playoffs, the 3rd annual AAA Insurance NHRA Midwest Nationals at Gateway Motorsports Park near St. Louis, Missouri, scheduled for Sept. 26-28. Three Team Mopar Pro Stock drivers — Allen Johnson, Coughlin and Gaines — will attempt to bring home Mopar the brand's third consecutive Pro Stock crown with four events left in the playoffs. Nitro drivers Hagan, Capps, and Tommy Johnson Jr. will continue their fight to capture the third Funny Car championship for Mopar in the last four years.

2014 Countdown to the Championship Standings

(Following the Texas NHRA Fall Nationals Final)

PRO STOCK (season wins in parentheses)

1. Jason Line – 2266 (4)
2. Dave Connolly – 2223 (2)
3. Shane Gray 2218 (1)
4. Erica Enders-Stevens – 2207 (4)
5. Jonathan Gray – 2192 (1)
6. Vincent Nobile – 2186 (1)
7. **Allen Johnson – Dodge Dart – 2166 (4)**
8. **Jeg Coughlin Jr. – Dodge Dart – 2150 (2)**

9. **V. Gaines – Dodge Dart – 2103**
10. Chris McGaha – 2073

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. John Force – 2258 (3)
2. Robert Hight – 2213 (5)
3. **Matt Hagan – Dodge Charger R/T – 2209 (2)**
4. Courtney Force – 2197 (3)
- 5t. **Ron Capps – Dodge Charger R/T – 2164 (2)**
- 5t. Alexis DeJoria – 2164 (3)
7. **Tommy Johnson Jr. – Dodge Charger R/T – 2162 (1)**
8. Del Worsham – 2135
9. Tim Wilkerson – 2123
10. Cruz Pedregon – 2093 (1)
11. **Jack Beckman – Dodge Charger R/T – 942**

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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