

Dodge Charger Driver Capps Scores Ticket to Rain Delayed NHRA Seattle Funny Car Final

- Ron Capps powers Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car to eighth final of season
- Rain halts action in Seattle, delaying Funny Car final two weeks to be finished at Brainerd event
- Schumacher, Pritchett represent Mopar power well in Top Fuel
- Reigning world champ Erica Enders commands Mopar Performance Dodge Dart Pro Stocker into top 10
- Mopar Dodge Dart Pro Stock cars make strides in Seattle

August 7, 2016, Kent, Washington - Rain curtailed the action just before the final round at this weekend's 29th annual NHRA Northwest Nationals near Seattle, but the wet weather certainly did not dampen the spirits of Ron Capps and his Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car crew. Capps, competing out of the Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) stable, methodically knocked out everyone in his way en route to his eighth final round of the season and 98th of his storied career before Mother Nature got her way and the final round was delayed to be completed at the next event on the schedule, the NHRA Nationals in Brainerd, Minn., Aug. 19-21.

"I feel bad for the fans who saw three great days of racing before today got hit by a few showers," said Capps.

Capps, the No. 2 qualifier on a 3.843-second pass that was the second quickest run in NHRA Funny Car history, raced newcomer Brandon Welch in the first round of eliminations. Capps was first off the starting line and clocked a clean 3.856 at 330.23 mph – the seventh quickest pass ever – in an easy victory over his troubled opponent.

The second round paired Capps with DSR teammate Tommy Johnson Jr. and the Make-A-Wish branded Dodge Charger R/T. Johnson was off the line first, but Capps closed the gap for a narrow 3.865/328.62 win over a 3.899/320.58. On the other side of the ladder, DSR teammates Matt Hagan in the Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger and Infinite Hero campaigner Jack Beckman squared off. When Beckman fouled out at the starting line, Hagan surged ahead and sealed the deal with a 3.903/299.80.

"We made huge leaps and bounds this weekend," said Hagan. "Killer conditions, killer air, and being able to run 3.8's consistently all weekend is incredible. I feel really confident, and I'm looking forward to Brainerd. We are headed in a positive direction coming out of this race."

In the semifinals, Del Worsham got the nod over Hagan by just .018-second, but Capps carried the banner for Mopar all the way when Jeff Diehl left the starting line too soon and illuminated the red-light. Capps clocked out of the semis with a crisp 3.890/327.11.

When the Seattle final is completed in Brainerd, it will mark the fifth time that Capps and Worsham have raced one another in eliminations this year. The season began with Capps edging Worsham in the final round in Pomona, and in Englishtown, Capps knocked out Worsham in the semis on his way to victory in the final.

The three-race Western Swing, long known in NHRA competition as one of the most strenuous stretches of all, will have included a Capps-Worsham stand-off in each event. In the first race of three in a row, the Mopar Mile-High NHRA Nationals in Denver, Capps bowed out to Worsham in the quarterfinals. Just last week in Sonoma, Capps ousted Worsham in the semifinals.

Regardless of the outcome of the final, Capps will remain the points leader.

Mopar in Top Fuel

No. 1 qualifier Tony Schumacher made a very good run in the first round of eliminations in his Mopar-powered U.S. Army Top Fuel dragster. Schumacher and Seattle local Ron Smith left the starting line nearly at the same time, but it was Schumacher at the top end with a 3.702/324.44 over a 4.003/292.20. With the powerful pass, Schumacher earned lane choice over Morgan Lucas in the second round. The pair left with identical .081-second reaction times, but Lucas edged ahead just as they went through the lights for an exceptionally narrow .005-second margin of victory, 3.701/319.09 to 3.706/326.63.

Notably, Schumacher's pole was the 80th of his career, and he is just the fifth Pro driver to record 80 or more No. 1 starts. He is the first driver to accomplish the feat in Top Fuel.

Schumacher's DSR Top Fuel teammate Leah Pritchett started from the No. 8 position and recorded her career-best pass in a losing effort after illuminating the red-light with a .033-second too quick reaction time. She was 3.707/325.30 at the final stripe. It was Pritchett's first red-light start in four years of Top Fuel competition.

"It's going to take a lot more than that to break my spirit," said Pritchett. "We win as a team, and we lose as a team. My guys have my back, and I always have theirs. That 3.70 was the best e.t. of my career, and we have a great car."

Pritchett remains 10th in the Top Fuel Mello Yello Drag Racing Series standings, while Schumacher is currently No. 5.

Mopar Dodge Dart Pro Stock Cars

Erica Enders made a major move in the first round of Seattle eliminations. Enders, who entered the event in the No. 11 position, has been battling to snag a position in the top 10 ahead of the 2016 Countdown to the Championship, NHRA's six-race playoffs that will begin in Charlotte following the U.S. Nationals in Indy.

Enders qualified her Mopar Performance Dodge Dart in the No. 11 spot, which guaranteed the opportunity to take matters into her own hands. The qualifying position lined her up for a first-round meeting with Alex Laughlin, the driver who occupied the 10 spot in the points heading into raceday.

Reigning and back-to-back Pro Stock world champ Enders put her exceptional driving skills to good use with a killer .009-second reaction time to Laughlin's .057, and she slammed the door on her opponent at the finish line stripe with a 6.581/209.39 to his 6.569/210.90. The margin of victory was .036-second, or approximately 11 feet.

"I said in my interview at the top end that it reminded me of racing Greg Anderson in the semifinals at the U.S. Nationals last year, where the winner of that round got to go into the Countdown in the No. 1 position. If I've said it once, I've said it a million times: Under pressure, [my team] is awesome together," said Enders.

Although she was stopped in the second round by Aaron Strong, Enders was enthusiastic.

"My guys gave me a good racecar," Enders continued. "It was important to put a little bit of a spread on Alex. It's not a big spread, but we'll take what we can get."

Five-time Pro Stock champion Jeg Coughlin Jr. qualified in the top half of the field for the seventh time this season and made his way to the second round.

"It felt nice to see the cars performing well," said Coughlin, No. 9 in the Pro Stock points. "We'll move on to Brainerd. That is a great race on the tour, and we have about 13 days before that starts. We need every minute and every hour in the days between now and then."

What's Next

Racing continues in two weeks with the NHRA Nationals at Brainerd International Raceway in Brainerd Minnesota, August 19-21. The race will be the 16th of the 2016 season of NHRA's Mello Yello Drag Racing Series. There are 18 races in the regular season before the six-race playoffs begin in Charlotte in September.

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The Mopar brand'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 2016, Mopar will look to once again vie for a NHRA World Championship title in both Pro Stock and Funny Car categories. While Mopar remains involved in a various professional motorsports series, it continues to honor its roots by being a proud supporter of Sportsman racing within the NHRA with its sponsorship of the HEMI Challenge and Mopar's Tom Hoover Sportsman Challenge.

Mopar

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