

Dodge Charger Funny Car Driver Jack Beckman Leads Mopar in NHRA Midwest Nationals Qualifying

- Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) Mopar Dodge Charger R/T driver Jack Beckman qualifies No. 2 at NHRA Midwest Nationals in St. Louis
- DSR Mopar Dodge Charger Funny Cars all in top half of St. Louis field; Ron Capps No. 3, Matt Hagan No. 5, Tommy Johnson Jr. No. 8
- Funny Car points leader Capps claims three bonus qualifying points to extend lead in HEMI®-powered Funny Car
- Tony Schumacher, Leah Pritchett situated in top half in DSR Mopar-powered Top Fuel dragsters
- Team Mopar has history of victory at Gateway Motorsports Park

September 24, 2016, Madison, Illinois - The second race of NHRA's 2016 Mello Yello Drag Racing Series Countdown to the Championship, the six-race playoffs that will ultimately determine the season champs, was a playground for Team Mopar in qualifying. Gateway Motorsports Park, located in Madison, Ill., and just across the state line from St. Louis, brought in a nice collection of points for the Mopar crowd, and Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) driver Jack Beckman, pilot of the Infinite Hero Foundation Dodge Charger R/T, was the best HEMI®-powered performer throughout Funny Car qualifying. Beckman will start from the No. 2 position.

Each of the four DSR Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Funny Cars is starting from the top half of the field.

Beckman has started No. 2 or better eight times this season. He entered the Countdown to the Championship last weekend in Charlotte as the No. 5 seed but, after a tough weekend, fell to No. 8. Beckman has one win in four final rounds so far this season and will be looking for his second victory of the year and 24th of his career on Sunday. He will begin the charge with a first-round meeting with Dale Creasy Jr., the driver he beat in the first round in Topeka earlier this year en route to a final-round finish. Notably, Beckman also qualified No. 2 at that event.

The hot racetrack and muggy weather brought about treacherous conditions, and Beckman was one of many who battled to get through four rounds of qualifying. All he needed, though, was one clean pass down the dragstrip to gain his lofty position. He did it in the second session as he laid down a big 3.907-second pass at 325.22 mph.

"If you look at the Infinite Hero team at the end of qualifying, you'll see that we qualified No. 2 – but that doesn't tell the whole story," said Beckman. "If you look at the details, you'll see we smoked the tires three out of four times – but that doesn't tell the whole story, either. The fact that we smoked the tires on three of the four runs doesn't mean we're lost. It means we're trying different things and seeing what the car likes here."

Beckman is one of two DSR Mopar Funny Car drivers to have won at Gateway Motorsports Park in the past, and the year he claimed his St. Louis win – 2012 – was the same year he went on to win the world championship.

"That year ended for me about as perfect as a year could end for a driver," said Beckman. "At this point, every single round is huge. The cars that are top three and four in points, they're not going out first early. We can't rely on them stumbling. We have to go deep every single race day from here on out."

Beckman's DSR teammate Ron Capps and his Mopar Dodge Charger came into the event leading the Funny Car points. During qualifying, just like Beckman, Capps struggled with the conditions. Finding the right tune-up to make a smooth run proved almost impossible until the final session, when crew chief Rahn Tobler turned all the right knobs and sent Capps down the racetrack to a bold 3.910/321.42 that vaulted them right up to the No. 3 position and

brought in three bonus points as the quickest car of the session.

"These are the weekends that make me proud to drive this Dodge Charger," said Capps, who will race John Bojec in the first round. "Fans outside the ropes might not have thought there was much going on in our pit, but there was a lot happening in there since the first run Friday. To come out and run that number we did on the last pass showed me again how much character this team has. I love these weekends more than when we unload Friday and run low E.T. [elapsed time]. These are the weekends you'll look back on at the end of the year as character building weekends that champions are made of."

Matt Hagan, in the Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T, went to the final round in St. Louis last season, and he is looking for one more win light on Sunday this year as he kicks off eliminations as the No. 5 seed. Hagan, whose best time in qualifying was a 3.914, will race Cruz Pedregon in round one. Tommy Johnson Jr., driver of the Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T, made his best qualifying pass in the final session as he raced to a 3.944/324.12. He will race Alexis DeJoria in the first round of eliminations.

In Top Fuel competition, Tony Schumacher had the best-performing HEMI® in his Mopar-powered U.S. Army Top Fuel dragster. Schumacher clocked a best time of 3.740/325.30 to earn a start from the No. 2 position. He will race veteran Top Fuel pilot Chris "The Golden Greek" Karamesines in the first round, while DSR teammate Leah Pritchett, in her Mopar dragster, will start seventh on a 3.770/325.92. She will square off with NHRA newcomer Wayne Newbie.

Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar Dodge Dart driver Jeg Coughlin Jr. qualified in the No. 10 position and will race Chris McGaha, Erica Enders and the Mopar Performance Dodge Dart will start 11th and race Jason Line, and veteran Dodge campaigner Allen Johnson, the No. 9 seed, will race Drew Skillman.

Team Mopar Drivers at NHRA Midwest Nationals

Currently competing Team Mopar drivers have brought in a nice assortment of victories in previous seasons at the NHRA Midwest Nationals. The most successful out of the Mopar camp is Capps, with three Gateway Motorsports Park wins. Schumacher, Coughlin, and Enders each have two, and Beckman has one.

Championship eliminations for the 4th annual NHRA Midwest Nationals at Gateway Motorsports Park near St. Louis are scheduled to begin at 11am CT Sunday.

About Mopar Motorsports

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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A simple combination of the words MOtor and PARts, Mopar offers exceptional service, parts and customer-care. Born in 1937 as the name of a line of antifreeze products, Mopar has evolved over more than 85 years to represent both complete vehicle care and authentic performance for owners and enthusiasts worldwide.

Mopar made its mark in the 1960s during the muscle-car era with performance parts to enhance speed and handling for both on-road and racing use. Later, Mopar expanded to include technical service and customer support, and today integrates service, parts and customer-care operations in order to enhance customer and dealer support worldwide.

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