

Mopar's 2012 NHRA Champs Johnson and Beckman Look to Defend National Title Wins at Kansas

- Mopar competes in the 25th annual NHRA Kansas Nationals this weekend, the 8th of 24 events in the NHRA Mello Yello Series season
- Mopar's 2012 NHRA Champs Johnson and Beckman are also both defending winners at Heartland Park Kansas
- Coughlin and Hagan running strong in second place in the NHRA Pro Stock and Funny Car points standings.

May 16, 2013, Topeka, Kan. -

Not only will Mopar take on to the 25th annual NHRA Kansas Nationals as the defending winner in both Pro Stock and Funny Car categories, but last year's two title winners also went on to earn their first career NHRA Championships, so you'll have to forgive Allen Johnson and Jack Beckman for hoping that their defense of those victories might have a similar ending this season as well.

"Every single title the J&J racing team won last year was very important in our chances to become number one at the start of the Countdown and take a run at the championship but Topeka win gave us the confidence that we were headed down the right path," said Johnson who had a near perfect weekend at the 2012 edition of the Kansas Nationals by securing the top qualifier position, taking almost every bonus point and working his way through the elimination rounds to post his second win of the season on his way to his first world championship title with a total of seven wins and 11 final-round appearances.

"We need a little bit of that right now as our focus has been a bit off in the last three weeks," admitted Johnson who after posting wins at the Gainesville and Las Vegas, hasn't made it past the second round of eliminations in the last three events. "We're shooting to bounce back in Topeka and doing everything we can to get back to fine form. It's an altitude track at which the HEMI-powered Mopar Dodge Avenger normally does really well at, just like Vegas and Denver. The key to doing well at here is having the tune-up correct at altitude."

Both he and Mopar teammate Jeg Coughlin Jr. tested at Tulsa Raceway Park in Oklahoma as preparation for this weekend's event to try and close the gap to rival Mike Edwards in the both the points battle and on the track.

"We're working on getting more consistent and getting a better combination for our Mopars," said Johnson who has two 'Wallys' at Topeka in the last three years and would like to add another as quickly as possible. "I think we've gained a little on Mike (Edwards) in the past few weeks, cutting his advantage a bit at a time. He's been quickest qualifier every weekend but Atlanta, when Jeg got it. He's the front runner right now but I think we cut the deficit in half on what he was leading on everybody since the start of the year."

For his part, Don Schumacher Racing's Jack Beckman is looking forward to returning to the place where his own drive for the 2012 Funny Car world title began and getting back to winning more elimination rounds to move up from his seventh spot in the points standings.

"We haven't been horrible; we have six round wins but we expected much bigger things by now," said Beckman. "This could be a big shot in the arm for us, emotionally going back to the place where our run to the championship kind of officially took off last year."

Meanwhile two other Mopar drivers have a bit of momentum and good results both finding themselves in second place in their respective classes; Jeg Coughlin Jr. and Matt Hagan.

Hagan has the 'Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar' Dodge Charger R/T second in the Funny Car points standings on the strength of a title win at Charlotte, one No. 1 qualifier position, two runner-ups and a semifinal finish in seven events for Don Schumacher Racing.

Coughlin for his part jumped into second place in the Pro Stock points with a No. 1 qualifier position at Houston and two final round appearances and posting three semifinal finishes in the first seven events of the season. He now has his sights set on taking the Jegs.com Mopar Dodge Avenger to a semifinal appearance in Kansas to help mark his 500th round win in NHRA Pro Stock competition. Only 11 other drivers have achieved that milestone; Joe Amato, Greg Anderson, Kenny Bernstein, Larry Dixon, John Force, Bob Glidden, Kurt Johnson, Warren Johnson, Cory McClenathan, Tony Schumacher and Tony Pedregon.

ESPN2 and ESPN2HD will provide coverage of this weekend's 25th annual NHRA Kansas Nationals, the seventh of 24 events in the NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series, with two hours of qualifying highlights on Saturday, May 18, at 5:30 p.m. (ET) and then a three hour broadcast of elimination rounds coverage on Sunday, May 19, starting at 8 p.m. (ET) from Heartland Park near Topeka.

2013 NHRA Championship Points Standings (after 7 races):

PRO STOCK (season wins in parentheses)

1. Mike Edwards (2) – 656
2. **Jeg Coughlin Jr. - Dodge Avenger – 530**
3. **Allen Johnson (2) - Dodge Avenger – 501**
3. Erica Enders-Stevens (1) – 482
5. Jason Line (1) – 472
6. Shane Gray – 421
7. **Vincent Nobile (1) - Dodge Avenger – 393**
8. Greg Anderson – 380
9. **V. Gaines- Dodge Avenger – 370**
10. Greg Stanfield – 322

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. Cruz Pedregon (2) – 547
2. **Matt Hagan (1) - Dodge Charger R/T – 534**
3. **Johnny Gray (2) - Dodge Charger R/T – 474**
4. **Ron Capps (1) - Dodge Charger R/T – 440**
5. Tim Wilkerson – 423
6. Courtney Force (1) – 421
7. **Jack Beckman, Dodge Charger R/T – 372**
8. Robert Hight – 343
9. Del Worsham – 342
10. Alexis DeJoria – 326

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 2013, Mopar looks to defend its two NHRA 2012 World Championship titles in Pro Stock and Funny Car categories, and celebrates 25 consecutive years as title sponsor of the Mopar Mile-High NHRA Nationals in Colorado. While Mopar remains involved in a various professional motorsports series, it continues to honor 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-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 consumers
- Electronic owner manuals: first to introduce traditional owner manuals in a DVD and brief user-guide format and 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 a new interactive vehicle tracking device that sends owner a text when vehicle is driven too fast or too far based on pre-set parameters
- 2011 Mopar Challenger Drag Pak: first to introduce a 500-plus cubic-inch V-10 drag-race package car
- Brand-specific customer care telephone lines: first to offer Sunday service hours for customers
- WiTECH: first to support vehicle diagnosis and software updates leveraging off-the-shelf personal computers and a dedicated wireless tool network

About the Mopar Brand

Mopar is Chrysler Group LLC's service, parts and customer-care brand. With the creation of the Chrysler Group and Fiat S.p.A. partnership, Mopar is extending its global reach, integrating service, parts and customer-care operations in order to enhance dealer and customer support worldwide. Combined with Fiat S.p.A., Mopar's global portfolio includes more than 500,000 parts and accessories that are distributed in more than 130 countries. Mopar is the source for all genuine parts and accessories for Chrysler Group and Fiat S.p.A. brands.

Mopar parts are unique in that they are engineered with the same teams that create factory-authorized vehicle specifications for Chrysler Group and Fiat S.p.A. 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.

More than 75 Years of Mopar

Mopar (a simple contraction of the words MOrtor and PARTs) was trademarked for antifreeze product in 1937. The Mopar brand made its mark in the 1960s — the muscle-car era. The Chrysler Corporation built race-ready Dodge and Plymouth "package cars" equipped with special high-performance parts. Mopar carried a line of "special parts" for super-stock drag racers and developed its racing parts division called Mopar Performance Parts to enhance speed and handling for both road and racing use. The brand has expanded to include technical service and customer support.

About Magneti Marelli

Based in Italy (Corbetta, Milan), Magneti Marelli was established in 1919. The company is a subsidiary of Fiat Group and has a presence and reputation in racing, including Formula 1 and World Rally Championship (WRC) and now the NHRA. With 2012 revenues of \$7.5 billion and approximately 36,900 employees, Magneti Marelli designs and produces advanced automotive systems and components. The company has 83 production facilities, 12 research and development centers and 26 application centers in 19 countries. The group supplies leading automakers in Europe, North America, South America and the Far East. Magneti Marelli USA coordinates the activities of all Magneti Marelli divisions in the NAFTA region from its North American headquarters, located in Auburn Hills, Michigan.

Magneti Marelli has established a significant presence in the world of aftermarket and service networks in the US, thanks to the partnership with MOPAR

Mopar Express Lane Service

Mopar Express Lane service, offered at participating Chrysler Group dealerships, provides a dedicated service lane for fast oil changes, and much more, in order to maximize customer convenience for all make and model vehicles. Available services include oil and filter changes, multi-point vehicle checkup, tire rotation with brake inspection, air and cabin filter replacement, wiper blade replacement, headlight and light bulb replacement and battery testing. Mopar Express Lane service is a consumer's best choice for vehicle maintenance, with highly-skilled Chrysler Group dealership technicians ready to get to work and get you back on the road in no time. No appointments. No waiting. No worries.

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