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Capps Drives Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat to NHRA Gatornationals Win for 10th Consecutive Don Schumacher Racing Victory

- No. 4 qualifier Ron Capps drives Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat to win at the 51st annual Amalie Motor Oil National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Gatornationals at historic Gainesville Raceway
- Capps' Gatornationals victory extends Don Schumacher Racing's (DSR) consecutive win streak to 10 consecutive national event victories
- Funny Car championship battle tightens up among DSR teammates as they sit 1-2-3-4 with four national events left
- No. 1 qualifier Matt Hagan drives Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye to a semifinal finish and within four points of leader Jack Beckman
- DSR Top Fuel driver Leah Pruett takes her Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye dragster from eighth qualifying position to semifinal appearance at the Gatornationals

September 27, 2020, Gainesville, Fla. - It was a Hell(cat) of a ride for Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) driver Ron Capps on his drive to the winner's circle at the 51st annual Amalie Motor Oil National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Gatornationals at historic Gainesville Raceway. Capps' fourth career Gatornationals event victory extended DSR's Funny Car consecutive win streak to 10 national events since October 2019.

From his No. 4 position on the eliminations ladder, Capps sped past competitors Jim Campbell and Alexis DeJoria and into a hotly contested semifinal match against No. 1 qualifier and DSR teammate Matt Hagan -- quite literally as Capps' Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car crossed the finish line in flames while still posting the lowest elapsed time run and top speed of the weekend.

"We blew up right when I stepped off the gas in the semifinals," said Capps, who emerged unscathed after turning on the win light and employing a "hockey stop" maneuver to slow his car after a 3.898-second pass at 329.99 mph to defeat Hagan's 4.016/312.64. "It exploded down there but thanks to the changes made by the Don Schumacher Racing fab (fabrication) shop, this body stayed on, rather than launch up in the air. I felt very safe after it blew up and everything stayed together on the car."

With limited time to return to the staging lanes, Capps' Crew Chief Rahn Tobler opted to unload a back-up Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat for the final round showdown against No. 2 qualifier Tim Wilkerson. Capps powered to a 3.937 sec./323.12-mph lap to defeat his opponent's 3.945/325.92 and bring home his second Wally trophy of the season and 66th of his career.

"We all knew it was (Crew Chief Rahn) Tobler's birthday and we all secretly wanted to win on his birthday, but to bring out a car that we had as a backup, that's never made it to the finish line and it goes 3.93 in the final round of the Gatornationals is crazy," said Capps. "He's had that car up in the trailer since last year when we ran it at 'Night Under Fire' at Norwalk (Ohio) and made a check-out run with it and he put it away for these occasions. With live TV pushing us, we had every team member of Don Schumacher Racing over here working on the car. It was unbelievable. Team members you're battling against in the championship are over here helping our guys and it was cool."

Those efforts resulted in moving Capps up one position into fourth place in the Funny Car championship standings and into a four-way fight amongst the DSR teammates atop the leaderboard with just four national events left on the 2020 calendar.

Leading the charge toward the Funny Car championship with 569 points is Jack Beckman and his Infinite Hero Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat, based on two wins and two runner-up finishes and who, despite a quarterfinal loss to top qualifier Hagan, remains four markers ahead of him.

For his part, Hagan drove the Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye out of the gates for the opening round bye-run just as the “demon-possessed” namesake implies, posting a 3.915-second run at 327.90 mph to immediately set the low elapsed-time (e.t.) and top speed standard to beat. With the win over Beckman and the loss to Capps, Hagan remains firmly in second place.

Sitting third in the points coming into the weekend, Tommy Johnson Jr. took his MD Anderson Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat for a drive to a first round win against J.R. Todd, which was followed by a quarterfinal loss to Wilkerson. Johnson does maintain his position in the standings with 512 points, ahead of Capps who rounds out the top four with 486 points.

While DSR Top Fuel driver Leah Pruett wasn't able to score her first Gatornats win, she did drive her red, black and chrome Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye dragster to her fourth straight semifinal appearance.

Pruett pedaled her way to an opening round victory against Joe Morrison to face No. 1 qualifier Clay Millican, against whom she earned an exciting holeshot win as they ran identical elapsed time passes of 3.788 seconds. That set up a semifinal battle with Steve Torrence, whom she had a slight second-place lead over in the Top Fuel championship standings coming into race day. Pruett drove her Mopar dragster to a solid 3.812-second pass but saw her day cut short by Torrence's 3.772-second effort. Torrence went on to win the Wally and move into the points lead ahead of Doug Kalitta, with Pruett still in the hunt sitting in third place in the Top Fuel standings just 33 points behind the leader.

In NHRA Factory Stock Showdown (FSS) qualifying, the Mopar Drag Pak duo of Mark Pawuk and Leah Pruett drove into eliminations seeded 10th and 12th respectively. Coming into Gainesville second in points behind Aaron Stanfield, Pawuk followed up his U.S. Nationals runner-up performance with a solid 8.091 seconds at 169.83-mph run in his Empaco Equipment Mopar Drag Pak to defeat David Kramer's 8.192 seconds in the opening round. While Pawuk had a lightning quick start with a 0.002-second reaction time against No. 2 qualifier Stephen Bell, he wasn't able to hold him off and fell short with a respectable 8.065/170.58 pass to the winner's 7.987/171.18 run.

From her 12th position on the eliminations ladder, Pruett and her Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak lined up next to No. 5 qualifier Arthur Kohn. Despite her best efforts, Kohn took the early lead and ended Pruett's day early.

The DSR Mopar Dodge//SRT teams and drivers will have a short time to get ready for next weekend's Mopar Express Lane NHRA Midwest Nationals at World Wide Technology Motorsports Park near St. Louis, Missouri. Two NHRA nitro qualifying sessions are scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 3, at 1:30 and 5:00 p.m. ET, with highlights to be aired on FS1 later that night from 10-11 p.m. ET and also on Sunday, Oct. 4, from 1:30-2:30 p.m. ET.

Elimination rounds at the Mopar Express Lane Midwest Nationals Presented by Pennzoil are scheduled to begin at 11 a.m. ET on Sunday, Oct. 4, with the television broadcast on FS1 beginning at 2:30 p.m. ET featuring live coverage of the final round.

ADDITIONAL NOTES and QUOTES:

Jack Beckman, Infinite Hero Foundation Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car

(No. 9 Qualifier – 4.123 seconds at 254.18 mph)

Round 1: (0.075-second reaction time, 3.921 seconds at 325.92 mph) defeated No. 8 Paul Lee (0.116/4.135/261.67)

Round 2: (0.051/4.134/242.67) loss to No. 1 Matt Hagan (0.066/3.954/325.37)

“If I had one do-over so far this year, I'd like to race that one again. We both knew we had to push hard against each other. I think their car did something weird in the bellhousing and it didn't run what they were anticipating. Ours was just a handful. We were pushing hard. I'm going to have to be smoother with my steering because when the car is accelerating that hard, it's on the razors edge of breaking loose the traction and I don't think I helped it by trying to keep it in the groove and making a lot of corrections. I think our 3.92 first round shows people that we're capable of running as good or better than anyone out here. We'll head on to St. Louis next week and we have another shot at a

trophy. There's four more opportunities and 16 rounds we just have to be incredibly greedy for the rest of the season. The big throwdown cars are probably ours and Dickie (Venables) and Matt's (Hagan) car. But don't write off NAPA and Rahn (Tobler) and TJ's (Tommy Johnson) also. They have a lot of poles and obviously a ton of other cars are really good. (Tim) Wilkerson is back in the thick of things and J.R. Todd raced us in the final at Indy. I'm looking forward to St. Louis. That's going to be a stout weekend."

Matt Hagan, Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye Funny Car

(No. 1 Qualifier – 3.975 seconds at 321.35 mph)

Round 1: (0.073-second reaction time, 3.915 seconds at 327.90 mph) bye-run

Round 2: (0.066/3.954/325.37) defeated No. 9 Jack Beckman (0.051/4.134/242.67)

Round 3: (0.020/4.016/312.64) loss to No. 4 Ron Capps (0.073/3.898/329.99)

"We have great race car. Dickie Venables is doing a great job and has been all year. He put us on the pole this weekend. Mike Knudsen is doing a great a job in the clutch department and overseeing things. Alex Conaway has been doing so well with the guys as a team leader. What I do see in these guys as they can see in the next four races they have a real shot at winning a championship. This Dodge SRT Hellcat Funny Car is running really strong and we need to keep that momentum going. You're going to have races that you go out early and others that you win and if we can keep pace with semifinals or better, you can win. We made up a lot of ground on (Jack) Beckman today and I'm really excited about that and we have more races to go. I don't know what's ahead, but I'm excited to be here and run fast and I'm going to drive my ass off for these guys and have some fun doing it. The weatherman, the only thing he knows is that there's increasing darkness by nightfall. I've never won St. Louis or here in Gainesville, we didn't get the Gators today so I'd like to check off St. Louis next weekend and bring that trophy home."

Tommy Johnson Jr., MD Anderson Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car

(No. 10 Qualifier – 4.129 seconds at 249.44 mph)

Round 1: (0.051-sec. reaction time, 3.962 seconds at 320.66 mph) defeated No. 7 J.R. Todd (0.060/4.006/321.58)

Round 2: (0.092/3.957/318.84) loss to No. 2 Tim Wilkerson (0.086/3.949/325.22)

"We probably would have won most races that round, we just ran the wrong guy that second round in (Tim) Wilkerson. That's a good car and it was a close race and we came up a little bit short. It will be a whole different race next weekend with the weather conditions. This MD Anderson car is on track. We struggled in qualifying and John (Collins) and Rip (Reynolds) got things back on track during eliminations today and we'll see if we can't continue that next weekend at St. Louis and gain some momentum in the points."

Ron Capps, NAPA Auto Parts Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car

(No. 4 Qualifier –seconds at mph)

Round 1: (0.075-second reaction time, 3.999 seconds at 325.14 mph) defeated No. 13 John Smith (0.089/4.024/302.21)

Round 2: (0.065/3.968/325.22) defeated No. 5 Alexis DeJoria (0.133/4.014/319.98)

Round 3: (0.073/3.898/329.99) defeated No. 1 Matt Hagan (0.020/4.016/312.64)

Round 4: (0.057/3.937/323.12) defeated No. 2 Tim Wilkerson (0.079/3.945/325.92)

"It was a crazy day today. There was a lot going on, probably more than a lot of fans realized. We've always got confidence that we can win a race. That NAPA Know How I brag about that (crew chief) Rahn Tobler has, I mean everybody's got their favorite neighborhood mechanic at a NAPA AutoCare Center and Tobler to me is that guy. He's the guy you can trust and the guy you can count on, and I'm confident we'll do big things as we head into this final stretch."

"We all knew it was Tobler's birthday and we all secretly wanted to win on his birthday. But to bring out a car that we had as a backup, that's never made it to the finish line and it goes 3.93 in the final round of the Gatornationals is crazy. He's had that car up in the trailer since last year when we ran it at 'Night Under Fire' at Norwalk (Ohio) and made a check-out run with it and he put it away for these occasions. With live TV pushing us, we had every team member of Don Schumacher Racing over here working on the car. It was unbelievable. Team members you're battling against in the championship are over here helping our guys and it was cool. I'm so happy for Tobler and (assistant crew chief) Dustin (Heim) because to go up there in the final round and beat someone like (Tim) Wilkerson in a final is always tough to do, but to do it with a car that has never been to a finish line, that's NAPA Know How."

Leah Pruett, Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye Top Fuel Dragster

(No. 8 Qualifier – 3.922 seconds at 315.64 mph)

Round 1: (0.056-second reaction time, 4.152 seconds at 300.13 mph) defeats No. 9 Joe Morrison (0.063/4.583/248.66)

Round 2: (0.053/3.788/321.96) defeated No. 1 Clay Millican (0.076/3.788/315.86)

Round 3: (0.038/3.812/310.20) loss to No. 4 Steve Torrence (0.037/3.772/324.36)

“It seems like we all lost about 15 pounds of water weight this weekend and I couldn’t be more proud of this group with the performance of this Dodge SRT car in very challenging conditions. We put out stout runs and we’ve made it to the semis at the majority of the races this year and we need to keep that momentum going. We wore through the clutch and the motor dropped a few holes in the top end against Steve Torrence in the semis. The top three is really getting tight and we are in a Countdown (to the Championship) however you want to look at it. We’re racing for the championship every single round. Our heads are very high. We’re looking forward to St. Louis and those cool conditions and when you’re excited about something you usually have good results and for us that’s a win that we’re strongly in need of.”

Mark Pawuk, Empaco Equipment Mopar Drag Pak– Factory Stock Shootout

(No. 10 Qualifier – 8.105 seconds at 171.99 mph)

Round 1: (0.032 second reaction time, 8.091 seconds at 169.83) defeated No. 7 David Kramer (0.022/8.192/168.05)

Round 2: (0.003/8.065/170.58) loss to No. 2 qualifier Stephen Bell (0.045/7.987/171.18)

Leah Pruett, Mopar Dodge Challenger Mopar Drag Pak – Factory Stock Shootout

(No. 12 Qualifier – 8.160 seconds at 169.25 mph)

Round 1: (0.071-second reaction time, 8.128 seconds at 167.28 mph) loss to No. 5 Arthur Kohn (0.010/8.027/170.82)

“(Arthur) Kohn had a phenomenal package that would have been hard to beat. We have a very awesome Mopar in the stable and we’re excited for St. Louis next weekend where we can put that power to the ground. We’re behind Mark’s (Pawuk) car and about a tenth (of a second) off. We’ll get that fixed and be back in the hunt. It’s going to be quite a seasonal change overnight going back to the Midwest and we’re looking forward to that with El Bandito. A full 180 with the program and I know we’re close to hitting it right.”

NHRA Championship Points Standings:

Following the Amalie Motor Oil NHRA Gatornationals

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. Jack Beckman (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 569 (2)

2. Matt Hagan (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 565 (2)

3. Tommy Johnson Jr. (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 512 (1)

4. Ron Capps (Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat) – 486 (2)

5. Tim Wilkerson – 448

6. Bob Tasca III – 434

7. J.R. Todd – 420

8. Alexis DeJoria – 296

9. Cruz Pedregon – 266

10. Paul Lee – 258

TOP FUEL (season wins in parentheses)

1. Steve Torrance – 548 (3)

2. Doug Kalitta – 526 (1)

3. Leah Pruett (Mopar Dodge//SRT) – 515

4. Billy Torrance – 433 (1)

5. Justin Ashley – 402 (1)

6. Shawn Langdon – 383 (1)

7. Terry McMillen – 377

8. Antron Brown – 373

9. Clay Millican – 337

DodgeGarage: Digital Hub for Drag Racing News

Fans can follow all the NHRA's action this season at DodgeGarage, the one-stop portal for Dodge//SRT and Mopar drag-racing news. The site includes daily updates and access to an online racing HQ, news, events, galleries, available downloads, and merchandise. For more information, visit www.dodgegarage.com.

@DodgeMoparMotorsports on Instagram

The [@DodgeMoparMotorsports](https://www.instagram.com/dodge_mopar_motorsports/) Instagram channel continues to share content capturing Dodge//SRT Mopar drivers on the track. Fans can see action from the NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series and NHRA Sportsman grassroots racers competing in classes such as Factory Stock Showdown, Stock and Super Stock, as well as additional motorsports series.

Official Driving School of Dodge//SRT

Dodge is the official sponsor of the Bondurant School of High Performance Driving in Chandler, Arizona, where guests get behind the wheels of the fastest street-legal cars in the world with professional instruction and time on the track. Customers who buy a new SRT model receive one full-day session as part of the Dodge//SRT Package and have the opportunity to learn how to get the optimum performance from their new vehicles in a controlled environment. For more information, visit dodgegarage.com/track-experience.

Mopar

Mopar (a simple contraction of the words MOTO and PARTS) is the service, parts and customer-care brand for FCA vehicles around the globe. Born in 1937 as the name of a line of antifreeze products, the Mopar brand has evolved over more than 80 years to represent both complete care and authentic performance for owners and enthusiasts worldwide.

Mopar made its mark in the 1960s during the muscle-car era, with Mopar Performance Parts to enhance speed and handling for both road and racing use, and expanded to include technical service and customer support. Today, the Mopar brand's global reach distributes more than 500,000 parts and accessories in more than 150 markets. With more than 50 parts distribution centers and 25 customer-contact centers globally, Mopar integrates service, parts and customer-care operations in order to enhance customer and dealer support worldwide.

Complete information on the Mopar brand is available at www.mopar.com. Mopar is part of the portfolio of brands offered by global automaker Fiat Chrysler Automobiles. For more information regarding FCA (NYSE: FCAU/ MTA: FCA), please visit www.fcagroup.com.

Dodge//SRT

For more than 100 years, the Dodge brand has carried on the spirit of brothers John and Horace Dodge. Their influence continues today as Dodge shifts into high gear with muscle cars and SUVs that deliver unrivaled performance in each of the segments where they compete.

2021 marks the year that Dodge is distilled into a pure performance brand, offering Hellcat-powered, 700+ horsepower SRT versions of every model across the lineup. For the 2021 model year, Dodge delivers the drag-strip dominating 807-horsepower Dodge Challenger SRT Super Stock, the new 797-horsepower Dodge Charger SRT Redeye, the most powerful and fastest mass-produced sedan in the world, and the new 710-horsepower Dodge Durango SRT Hellcat, the most powerful SUV ever. Combined, these three muscle cars make Dodge the industry's most powerful brand, offering more horsepower than any other American brand across its entire lineup.

In June 2020, Dodge was named the "#1 Brand in Initial Quality," making it the first domestic brand ever to rank No. 1 in the J.D. Power Initial Quality Study (IQS). Dodge is part of the portfolio of brands offered by global automaker Fiat Chrysler Automobiles. For more information regarding FCA (NYSE: FCAU/ MTA: FCA), please visit www.fcagroup.com.

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