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## **Mopar Express Lane NHRA Nationals Presented by Pennzoil Launch the 'Countdown to the Championship' Playoff Series**

- Mopar Express Lane Nationals Presented by Pennzoil take place at Maple Grove Raceway near Reading, Pennsylvania, Sept. 12-14 as the first of seven events in the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) playoff series "Countdown to the Championship"
- This weekend's competition is the fourth of five NHRA national events with Mopar and Dodge//SRT title sponsorship support in 2021
- Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) Top Fuel pilot Leah Pruett returns to the fastest track on the circuit with a Mopar paint scheme on her HEMI®-powered dragster as the No. 4 seed to kick off the postseason battle
- Ron Capps drives his Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat from a runner-up finish at the Dodge//SRT U.S. Nationals last weekend to Maple Grove Raceway as the Funny Car No. 1 seed for the NHRA playoff series opening event
- Reigning Funny Car World Champ Matt Hagan will miss this weekend's event at Reading as he recovers from COVID-19; Tommy Johnson Jr. will be in the driver's seat of the Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat to start the playoffs from fifth place in the championship points standings

September 8, 2021, Auburn Hills, Mich. - The 36th annual Mopar Express Lane Nationals Presented by Pennzoil are set for this weekend at Maple Grove Raceway near Reading, Pennsylvania, with Mopar and Dodge//SRT-supported racers staged and ready to begin their drive for National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) world championship titles in the first of seven "Countdown to the Championship" playoff series national events.

This weekend's competition marks the fourth of five national events supported by Mopar and Dodge//SRT title sponsorship during the NHRA's 70th anniversary season and the first of two playoff contests, which include the penultimate event at the Dodge//SRT NHRA Nationals Presented by Pennzoil in Las Vegas Oct. 29-Nov. 1.

"We're pleased to be back at Maple Grove Raceway with our Pennzoil partners for the Mopar Express Lane NHRA Nationals to kick off the NHRA's 'Countdown to the Championship' playoff series," said Mark Bosanac, North America Vice President, Mopar Service, Parts & Customer Care. "We look forward to watching our HEMI®-powered racers compete while showcasing the Mopar brand to ultra-passionate drag racing enthusiasts."

Mopar Express Lane provides quick in-and-out, high-quality, factory-backed service by certified technicians at more than 1,000 locations across the nation. Racers and fans will see the familiar blue, white and yellow Mopar Express Lane signage at Maple Grove Raceway as NHRA returns to one of the fastest tracks on the circuit Sept. 12-14. After a year hiatus from both the venue and the playoff format, record runs and high-horsepower performances facilitated by cooler fall weather conditions are anticipated.

Fans are invited to visit the Mopar exhibit at the track's Manufacturers Midway to peruse a selection of the brand's quality performance part offerings and experience what it feels like on track aboard an actual Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Redeye Funny Car simulator.

Leah Pruett's HEMI-powered Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) Mopar Dodge//SRT dragster will be dressed for success in the familiar Mopar blue and white primary paint scheme as she works to take home her first Wally trophy from Reading. She takes to the track as the No. 4 seed in the Top Fuel ranks after a quarterfinal appearance at last weekend's Dodge//SRT U.S. Nationals.

"Leaving there fourth in points, heading into Reading for the Mopar Express Lane Nationals and starting the

Countdown from there, we feel good about that," said Pruett, who scored a win and a runner-up finish in the second half of the regular season. "Right now we have the most capable and consistent car that we've had all year long and that is responding to what we want it to do. That's exactly where we want to be going into the countdown."

Reigning Funny Car World Champ Matt Hagan will remain sidelined for this weekend's event as he recovers from COVID-19. Tommy Johnson Jr. will slip into the driver's seat of the Mopar Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car in Hagan's place as he did at the Dodge//SRT U.S. Nationals when the entry did not qualify due to a mechanical issue on Friday and rain on Saturday. Johnson was the clear choice after finishing runner-up to Hagan in the 2020 NHRA Funny Car World Championship with DSR, powering to three wins and three No. 1 qualifier positions last season. The points Johnson accumulates during this race weekend will be awarded to Hagan, who starts the Countdown ranked fifth.

DSR driver Ron Capps arrives at Maple Grove Raceway in his HEMI-powered Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat fresh off a runner-up finish at the Dodge//SRT U.S. Nationals and as the top seed for the Funny Car world championship after points were reset for the playoff battle, giving him a 20-point lead. Capps earned the No. 1 qualifier position and set Maple Grove's current elapsed time and speed records in 2019 with a 3.837-second pass at 339.28 mph. He also took home a Wally from the venue in 2018.

"Going to Maple Grove to start the Countdown and having a race car as good as our's is right now with consistency and performance is exciting," said Capps. "I'm really pumped to get to Maple Grove to start the playoffs. We won the championship in 2016 without winning a race in the Countdown but we were, by far, the most consistent car. We put the pressure on people and that's what you have to do. We have a great team with John Medlen and Guido (Dean Antonelli), they're firing on all cylinders and it's really great to drive this Hellcat Funny Car."

Meanwhile, fellow Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat driver Cruz Pedregon has two wins at Reading (1992, 2010) and is working to build on his semifinal performance last weekend at the Dodge//SRT U.S. Nationals in Indianapolis to work his way up from an eighth place position in the championship battle.

"We're really optimistic about going into the Mopar Express Lane Nationals at Maple Grove Raceway, which is a fast race track. I looked at the weather and it's expected to be in the 70s (degrees Fahrenheit) so it's just going to be a 'just hammer down' kind of event. The fall temperatures are going to cool down but the action is going to heat up. One thing we did prove at Brainerd two races ago is that we can hammer out the fast times and run in the high 3.80s (elapsed time passes). That's probably what it's going to take to win down the stretch here. We're just going to take one race at a time and keep this momentum going that we've enjoyed. I've talked to (crew chiefs) JC (John Collins) and Rip (Reynolds) and everybody's excited and just looking forward to it."

On-track action at the Mopar Express Lane Nationals Presented by Pennzoil begins with one qualifying session in the late afternoon on Friday and two sessions on Saturday to determine the lineup for Sunday's final eliminations rounds. Coverage of the event will be available via online streaming at NHRA.TV, while television coverage will be broadcast on FS1 on Sunday, Sept. 14, with qualifying highlights 12-2 p.m. ET and race coverage 2-5 p.m. ET.

#### **DodgeGarage: Digital Hub for Drag Racing News**

Fans can follow all the NHRA 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](http://www.dodgegarage.com).

#### **@DodgeMoparMotorsports on Instagram**

The @DodgeMoparMotorsports Instagram channel continues to share content capturing Dodge//SRT Mopar drivers on the track. Fans can see action from the NHRA Camping World 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.

#### **Mopar**

Mopar (a simple contraction of the words MOtor and PARts) offers exceptional service, parts and customer care. 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 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, the brand expanded to include technical service and customer support. Today, Mopar integrates service, parts and customer-care operations in order to enhance customer and dealer support worldwide.

Mopar is part of the portfolio of brands offered by leading global automaker and mobility provider Stellantis. For more information regarding Stellantis (NYSE: STLA), please visit [www.stellantis.com](http://www.stellantis.com).

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### **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-plus-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 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). The Dodge brand also [ranked No. 1](#) in the J.D. Power APEAL Study (mass market). These results are historic because it marks the first time a domestic brand has earned top spots in both J.D. Power studies in the same year.

Dodge is part of the portfolio of brands offered by leading global automaker and mobility provider Stellantis. For more information regarding Stellantis (NYSE: STLA), please visit [www.stellantis.com](http://www.stellantis.com).

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