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Tony Stewart Scores First Top Fuel Final at NHRA Sonoma Nationals, Matt Hagan Takes Semifinal Finish in Dodge//SRT Hellcat Funny Car

- Motorsports legend Tony Stewart just missed adding to his amazing win record Sunday at NHRA Sonoma Nationals, driving his Tony Stewart Racing (TSR) Rinnai Dodge//SRT Top Fueler to a final-round appearance
- Stewart's runner-up finish was his first final round in his rookie Top Fuel season as he looks for a win in a fourth different racing discipline (NASCAR, IndyCar, USAC and NHRA)
- Stewart defeated Shawn Langdon, Justin Ashley and Ron August Jr. to reach his first Top Fuel final in his 12th professional event before a close loss to former world champion Antron Brown
- Stewart won his last NASCAR Cup race at Sonoma in 2016 and was seeking a storybook return by leaving on Brown at the starting line, but Brown's 3.746 beat Stewart's 3.774 pass
- Stewart's final round showing kept the Indiana driver in the top-ten in NHRA Mission Top Fuel points entering the Lucas Oil Nationals at Brainerd, Minnesota, on August 16-18
- Reigning NHRA Mission Drag Racing Funny Car Champion Matt Hagan, seeking his first Sonoma Nationals win, advanced to the semifinals in his TSR JHG Dodge//SRT Hellcat
- Hagan, who qualified second Saturday in front of a huge crowd, defeated Jeff Diehl and Chad Green in the opening two rounds before just being nipped by Ron Capps in the semifinals
- Hagan, the four-time NHRA World Champion, ran 3.933 to Capps' 3.923 in the semifinals in a close showdown at the finish line and remained third in the NHRA Mission Funny Car points
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July 29, 2024, Auburn Hills, Mich. - Racing legend Tony Stewart just missed making motorsports history Sunday at the NHRA DENSO Sonoma Nationals when he scored a Top Fuel runner-up finish with his Tony Stewart Racing (TSR) Rinnai Dodge//SRT nitro-burning dragster.

Stewart, the NASCAR Hall of Famer, was attempting to become the first driver in racing history to capture major professional race wins in four separate disciplines (NASCAR, IndyCar, USAC and NHRA) as he faced former world champion Antron Brown in the Top Fuel final round in just his 12th professional event.

Stewart, who had defeated Shawn Langdon, Justin Ashley and Ron August Jr. in the first three rounds of competition before a large crowd in the 75-degree weather, posted a quicker reaction time over Brown, but Brown's car drove around Stewart's mount with a 3.746 to 3.774 for the Top Fuel event title.

Replacing his wife, Leah Pruett, at the beginning of the 2024 season in the TSR Dodge//SRT dragster as the pair begin a family in November, Stewart has been impressive off the starting line and showed it again Sunday with a great reaction time against two of the best in Top Fuel: Ashley in the second round and Brown in the final. The runner-up finish for Stewart keeps him in the top-ten in the NHRA Mission Top Fuel points standings as the series heads to Brainerd, Minnesota, for the NHRA Lucas Oil Nationals on Aug. 16-18.

Stewart, a three-time NASCAR Cup winner at Sonoma Raceway, had not competed at the track since 2016 when he captured his last NASCAR race and was seeking a "storybook" ending by putting the TSR Dodge//SRT Top Fuel dragster in Sonoma victory lane.

"This was a much better weekend than I anticipated," said Stewart after the final. "We knew after last week's

Seattle race that we had to regroup. Dickie Venables from Matt's (Hagan Funny Car) team offered to help us, and we walked through many things with our Top Fuel guys and Dickie. We were trying to see if there was a 'smoking gun' we were missing. We needed a day like today for the team guys. In the final, we did everything we could as we left on one of the best drivers in Top Fuel. To leave on Antron in the final is very big for me as a driver. We spit a couple of (spark) plugs out at the far end and, if Antron had any problem, we were right there for the win.

"I'm so proud of the team and the morale is great. That was the key to the success today. We gained speed this weekend and ran three 330s (m.p.h.). We'll take what we learned this weekend and try to make it better. We kept Antron honest in the final and we made improvements with the car. It was my first two-car final and I'm proud how the weekend went overall."

Stewart's TSR teammate, Matt Hagan, piloted his TSR JHG Dodge//SRT Hellcat Funny Car to the semifinals Sunday at the NHRA Sonoma Nationals and stayed third in the current NHRA Mission Funny Car points.

After a blistering 3.839 qualifying run Saturday to place him second in the 16-car field, the defending NHRA Mission Funny Car World Champion defeated Jeff Diehl and Chad Green in the opening two rounds of eliminations before facing former champion Ron Capps in the semifinals. In a close race at the finish line, Capps' 3.923 bettered Hagan's 3.933.

"The Dodge//SRT race car is coming around now," said Hagan, who scored wins earlier this year at Charlotte and Chicago. "We tried some things in the bellhousing in the summer races. We have to do that to grow. This weekend we went back to the direction we have run over the past years with the car. With our proven setup, the car ran well all weekend including qualifying No. 2 with a 3.839. It was a great weekend overall with the facility, race surface and the great crowd. We put on a good show too.

"We were just on the back side of a good drag race with Ron (Capps) in the semis. We just didn't have enough. We'll get in our 'Countdown' mindset now. You have to win a couple of races in the 'Countdown' to have a shot at the championship. We have some work to do. It's never easy in this sport. So, when you win it, it does feel so good. We are usually good in the 'Countdown' and that's our goal again. I'm really excited for Tony (Stewart, teammate and team owner) and his crew to go to the final round. This is a team effort with TSR."

Stewart and Hagan are back in action at the NHRA Lucas Oil Nationals in Brainerd, with qualifying scheduled for Friday, Aug. 16, at 4:30 p.m. CDT and 6:45 p.m. CDT, and Saturday, Aug. 17 at 12:30 p.m. CDT and 3 p.m. CDT. Sunday's final eliminations will begin at 10:30 a.m. CDT.

The FOX Network will televise the Brainerd event on Sunday, Aug. 18, at 3 p.m. EDT.

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Dodge//SRT

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Dodge also keeps its foot on the gas as a pure performance brand with the 710-horsepower Dodge Durango SRT Hellcat, the most powerful SUV ever, and best-in-class standard performance in the compact utility vehicle segment

with the Dodge Hornet.

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