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Johnson Wins NHRA Finals in Mopar Dodge Funny Car, Capps Finishes as Runner-up in Final Standings

Austin Williams takes Stock Eliminator victory

- Tommy Johnson Jr. wins 53rd annual NHRA Finals in Mopar HEMI®-powered Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car from Don Schumacher Racing (DSR)
- Mopar claims 21 victories in Pro categories in 2017 (16 in Funny Car, five in Top Fuel)
- Mopar Dodge Funny Cars appear in 21 of 24 final rounds in 2017, Mopar Top Fuel dragsters make 10 final-round appearances
- Ron Capps finishes as runner-up in final Funny Car point standings to lead Mopar, Leah Pritchett leads Mopar in Top Fuel category with fifth-place finish in standings
- Allen Johnson competes in final event in Mopar-powered Dodge Dart in Pro Stock
- Austin Williams wins Stock Eliminator in 1972 Plymouth Duster, Mopar-powered drivers represent three of four semifinalists in category
- Williams named Dodge Top Finisher in Stock Eliminator, Jon Irving takes award in Super Stock Eliminator category
- Troy Johnston takes Sportsman ET win in '72 Duster

November 12, 2017, Pomona, Calif. - A drama-filled Sunday afternoon at Auto Club Raceway at Pomona closed out the 2017 NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series calendar, as Mopar Funny Car driver Tommy Johnson Jr. gave the brand its 16th victory of the season in the category during the NHRA Finals, and teammate Ron Capps finished as runner-up in the year-end standings.

Austin Williams also claimed the win for Mopar in Stock Eliminator behind the wheel of his 1972 Plymouth Duster.

Mopar HEMI® power from Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) claimed a total of 21 wins in the Pro classes over the course of 2017 – the brand's 80th anniversary year. DSR Mopar Funny Cars reached the winner's circle 16 times, taking victories in exactly two-thirds of the events this season and winning twice as many races as the rest of the manufacturers combined. In addition, at least one Mopar Dodge Funny Car reached the final round in 21 of 24 events on the schedule. Mopar-backed Top Fuel dragsters from DSR meanwhile took five victories and appeared in a total of 10 final rounds.

On Sunday at Pomona, Johnson drove his Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T from DSR past newly crowned 2017 Funny Car champion Robert Hight in the final with a 3.920-second pass at 329.10 mph from the left lane after a .037-second reaction time. Hight struggled to find traction, making a lap of 6.827 at 103.71 after leaving the line with a reaction time of .055.

The victory was Johnson's second of the season and the 15th of his Funny Car career. He also has two in the Top Fuel category.

Johnson, the defending event winner in the NHRA Finals at the historic Pomona track, first knocked out Dodge driver Bob Bode despite losing a cylinder down track as Bode couldn't get off the starting line cleanly. Johnson next bested Alexis DeJoria, but due to a faulty parachute ended up in the sand at the end of the shutdown area. Undeterred, the team brought out a backup body from last season and bested DSR Mopar teammate Jack Beckman on a side-by-side run to reach their sixth final round of the year. Johnson finished sixth in the final point standings after his victory.

Ron Capps, the defending Funny Car champion, came into the Sunday elimination rounds of the NHRA Finals eight markers behind Robert Hight in the Countdown to the Championship playoffs, despite having led the standings for the majority of the season on the strength of eight wins. Capps and his Dodge Charger R/T team from DSR came up just short in their bid for back-to-back world championships, however, as Capps was bested by Del Worsham in round one, guaranteeing Hight the 2017 title. Capps has now been runner-up in Funny Car five times in his career.

Fellow Mopar driver "Fast" Jack Beckman had a very solid weekend, qualifying No. 1 for the second week in a row and opening the Sunday elimination rounds with a pass just .002 off his qualifying elapsed time to push his Infinite Hero Dodge Charger R/T past Jeff Arend, who smoked his tires. Beckman next made another clean pass to eliminate John Force, before ultimately being defeated by Johnson. Beckman finished fourth in the final standings and collected two wins during the 2017 campaign.

Matt Hagan moved to the second round in his Mopar 80th/Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car from DSR after a solo in round one when Gary Densham was unable to make the call. Hagan's 2017 campaign then came to a close after he was narrowly defeated by Hight. Hagan took four victories during the season and finished fifth in points.

In Top Fuel, Leah Pritchett drove her Papa John's Pizza/Mopar Pennzoil dragster from the DSR stable past Scott Palmer on a clean-pass in round one as Palmer went up in smoke. Pritchett was then defeated in round two at the hands of Shawn Langdon after he staged exceptionally late. Despite the loss, Pritchett still had a breakout year which included four wins and a fifth-place finish in the standings.

Pritchett's Mopar teammate, eight-time champion Tony Schumacher, was bested on a holeshot victory by Langdon in round one. Schumacher and the U.S. Army team ended their season eighth in the standings with one victory.

It was an emotional weekend for Mopar Pro Stock driver Allen Johnson, who ended his 22-year career at Pomona, after announcing his retirement earlier this season. The 2012 champion and 27-time race winner was defeated by longtime friend and competitor Erica Enders in the first round. Johnson finished his final season eighth in points.

The 53rd annual NHRA Finals at Auto Club Raceway at Pomona featured large crowds on hand to witness tight points battles in ideal conditions for quick and fast racing. Shortly after wrapping up his second Funny Car title, Robert Hight also suffered an explosion and wall contact in the semis that ultimately found him in the netting at the back of the gravel. He was unhurt and returned to take on Tommy Johnson Jr. in the final round. Brittany Force claimed the championship in the Top Fuel category.

Mopar/Dodge Notes & Quotes

Pietro Gorlier, Head of Parts and Service (Mopar) FCA

"As our 80th anniversary celebration draws to a close, we are very proud to have also been part of 21 victories across both Funny Car and Top Fuel with vehicles featuring Mopar HEMI power. Congratulations to Tommy Johnson Jr. and team on capping off this special year with a win in their Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T at the NHRA Finals."

Tommy Johnson Jr., Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car **(No. 4 Qualifier – 3.887 seconds at 314.31 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.089-second reaction time, 4.047 seconds at 283.79 mph) defeated No. 13 Bob Bode (no time - mechanical)
Rd. 2: (.050/3.911/329.34) defeated No. 5 Alexis DeJoria (.074/3.944/327.90)
Semis: (.048/3.890/329.18) defeated No. 1 Jack Beckman (.045/3.914/327.74)
Final: (.037/3.920/329.10) defeated No. 15 Robert Hight (.055/6.827/103.71)

"We came in here and kind of used this race as a test. We tested on Monday in Vegas with a 6-disc and decided to leave it in for here to kind of get ahead on next year. It ran flawless all weekend. The guys did a great job of adapting. That's a big change. To put it in and win the first race with a 6-disc speaks volumes of what the next year is going to bring.

"We won one year ago at this race with Terry (Chandler, late mentor and friend who funded the team), and I really wanted to win this for her. I tried several times this year to get a win for her but we just couldn't get it done. I thought

this is the last one and we're going to do it (win) this weekend. She was a great lady and we're going to miss her dearly. Our entire team has had a lot of family deaths this year, three guys on my team lost a family member this year. Been a rough year for us but we kept fighting. After going into the sand the second round it showed the kind of fight we had. We wanted to win this for Terry and that's why I said, 'This win is for Terry!'"

Ron Capps, NAPA Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car

(No. 6 Qualifier – 3.897 seconds at 328.22 mph)

Rd. 1: (.089-second reaction time, 4.177 seconds at 316.52 mph) lost to No. (.077/4.045/306.19)

"It rattled and I gave it a pedal. I saw Del (Worsham) out there. Del is one of the throwback, great racers still around. I love racing him; I get up to race him. Just I guess it wasn't meant to be. We had a great season. It's big. It hurts a lot to come all the way down here and win eight races and then lose the championship. But I want to thank everybody for coming out. We're going to get ready for next year."

Matt Hagan, Mopar 80th/Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car

(No. 7 Qualifier – 3.898 seconds at 333.08 mph)

Rd. 1: (.154-second reaction time, 3.872 seconds at 332.59 mph) defeated No. 10 Gary Densham (no show – mechanical)

Rd. 2: (.055/3.875/332.18) lost to No. 15 Robert Hight (.049/3.851/334.32)

"It's one of those years where you come out strong, winning the first two races and feel it's going to be the year. But then the heat comes on and things change and you make adjustments. You have to adapt and we did and learned a lot. I wouldn't trade (crew chief) Dickie Venables or (assistant) Mike Knudsen for anybody out there. I feel like we're growing as a group together. We have a lot of good chemistry and know each other's ins and out and our every moves. I think it takes that to really click and win races and win championships. You're not going to win them all the time but we've always been in the hunt, involved in the race. That means a lot to me because every time I strap in the car I know I've got a chance on Sunday to win. And drag racing is only going to get more competitive, there's only going to be more cars come in and there's only going to be more competition. You have to get after it. We're always growing, adapting, R&D-ing. I think we have what it takes to come back and work harder, be a winner and come back strong. It's a blessing and neat environment to be here at DSR and live out a dream to drive a race car and be paid to do it. I couldn't ask for any more opportunity than that."

Leah Pritchett, Papa John's Pizza/Mopar Pennzoil Top Fuel Dragster

(No. 3 Qualifier – 3.674 seconds at 325.61 mph)

Rd. 1: (.066-second reaction time, 3.712 seconds at 329.50 mph) defeated No. 14 Scott Palmer (.082/7.901/104.87)

Rd. 2: (.066/3.714/320.20) lost to No. 11 Shawn Langdon (.062/3.683/321.81)

"Unfortunately it was not the finish we wanted for Sunday, but today marks a dream that I've had for my entire life – to compete at all 24 events in a season, the whole season. This is the first time I've been able to do it. To finish in the fifth position for Don Schumacher Racing is incredible. This team has proven they are championship caliber and I think this season constitutes a very healthy warmup for championship contention for the 2018 season. We have no reason to hang our head. We have a couple of things to work on and couldn't be more excited about this group staying together and fighting it out next year."

Jack Beckman, Infinite Hero Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car

(No. 1 Qualifier – 3.835 seconds at 334.98 mph)

Rd. 1: (.073-second reaction time, 3.837 seconds at 333.74 mph) defeated No.16 Jeff Arend (.083/10.678/85.73)

Rd. 2: (.064/3.851/332.51) defeated No. 8 John Force (.097/3.932/310.98)

Semis: (.045/3.914/327.74) lost to No. 4 Tommy Johnson Jr. (.048/3.890/329.18)

"I think the nice thing about this is we now know we have a car that can win any race. In the last few races we haven't had any of those lucky breaks in the rounds and once in a while you need those. I was so proud of the guys after the first round. We're warming up for the second round and the clutch seized up. So we had to install a spare

clutch cannon and they don't always respond the same. So the fact that they were able to make the adjustments, we went out there and got the second-round win. And then in the semis against Tommy, the car just didn't do exactly what it was supposed to do. It's a bummer because that round would've been third place in the points. But I don't think we have to change anything in the offseason. I think we get to freshen our inventory, go test and we're ready to unload at the Winternationals."

Tony Schumacher, U.S. Army Top Fuel Dragster
(No. 6 Qualifier – 3.721 seconds at 328.54 mph)

Rd. 1: (.057-second reaction time, 3.724 seconds at 328.38 mph) lost to No. 11 Shawn Langdon (.046/3.725/326.16 – holeshot win)

"It was one of those seasons where you can look back on so many things that you could've done differently and ended up winning a bunch of races. It's all about timing. Just look at the runs in the first round today – we would've won against all of the other seven cars from the lower half of the qualifying order, and it just seems like it was that way so many times this year. But we also were outrun by other great teams and drivers who had great runs at the right time against us this year. We need to step it up. For the next two months, we need to get it together and come out fighting next year. This U.S. Army team is a great team representing the greatest fighting force in the world and I'm as proud to be a part of it as I ever was. We celebrated Veterans Day here all weekend with a tribute to all the men and women who have served this great nation of ours and the reason this team goes racing."

Mopar/Dodge NHRA Sportsman Spotlight

Mopar Sportsman competitors turned in exceptionally strong efforts in both the Stock and Super Stock Eliminator categories at the NHRA Finals, including a win in Stock by former world champion Austin Williams. Three of the four semifinalists in the category drove Mopar-powered vehicles.

Williams, who hails from Burleson, Texas, took his eighth national event Wally trophy in Stock behind the wheel of his G/SA 1972 Plymouth Duster 340. In the final he turned in a lap of 11.080 seconds at 109.61 mph, exactly running his 11.08 dial-in. Williams left the line with a .025-second reaction time. He bettered opponent Chris Stephenson's 10.620 at 122.56, who had a reaction time of .054. Stephenson's dial-in was 10.64, meaning he broke out by .020.

In Super Stock Eliminator, Jon Irving of Henderson, Nevada, turned in the best effort for Mopar, reaching the third round in his SS/MA 1980 Dodge Aspen. In the round, Irving made a pass of 11.177 at 113.96 on an 11.19 dial-in, breaking out by .013. He left the starting line with a .036 reaction time. The vehicle is powered by a 318 cubic-inch engine and features a four-barrel carburetor. It has always been a race car and only has 25 street miles.

Williams and Irving each claimed the Dodge Top Finisher award of their respective categories. The program was in place at all 24 national events in 2017, and provided a \$500 bonus to the Stock Eliminator and Super Stock Eliminator driver who advanced the farthest in a Dodge or Plymouth vehicle.

In addition, Keyport, Washington's Troy Johnston took the Sportsman ET win in a '72 Duster.

Up Next: NHRA Winternationals

The NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series returns to kick off the 2018 campaign with the 58th annual NHRA Winternationals at Auto Club Raceway at Pomona on February 8 – 11, 2018.

For more information on Mopar and Dodge in NHRA, check out the Mopar brand's official blog, <http://blog.mopar.com>.

2017 NHRA Championship — Final Point Standings After Round 24 of 24
(Season Wins in Parentheses)

NHRA Funny Car

1. Robert Hight (4) – 2,686
2. Ron Capps, Dodge Charger R/T (8) – 2,588
3. Courtney Force – 2,543
4. Jack Beckman, Dodge Charger R/T (2) – 2,519

5. Matt Hagan, Dodge Charger R/T (4) – 2,470

6. Tommy Johnson Jr., Dodge Charger R/T (2) – 2,452

7. John Force (1) – 2,388
8. Tim Wilkerson – 2,296
9. J.R. Todd (2) – 2,282
10. Cruz Pedregon – 2,178

NHRA Top Fuel

1. Brittany Force (4) – 2,690
2. Steve Torrence (8) – 2,609
3. Doug Kalitta – (1) 2,553
4. Antron Brown (4) – 2,508

5. Leah Pritchett, Mopar HEMI (4) – 2,452

6. Clay Millican (1) – 2,419
7. Shawn Langdon – 2,406

8. Tony Schumacher, Mopar HEMI (1) – 2,395

9. Terry McMillen (1) – 2,310
10. Scott Palmer – 2,218

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, thanks to Don Schumacher Racing driver Ron Capps, Mopar captured its fourth NHRA Funny Car World Championship in the last six years. As Mopar celebrates 80 years as a brand in 2017, it will focus its NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series efforts on NHRA Funny Car and, with rising star Leah Pritchett, NHRA Top Fuel Dragster. Mopar will also bolster its commitment to NHRA Sportsman racing with new contingency rewards, factory support and at-track technical advice and guidance.

Mopar-First Features

During the brand's 80 years, 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
- wiADVISOR: first to incorporate a tablet-based service lane tool
- 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
- Wi-Fi: first to offer customers the ability to make their vehicle a wireless hot spot
- Electronic owner manuals: first to introduce traditional owner manuals on a smartphone app

80 Years of Mopar

Mopar (a simple contraction of the words MOtor and PARTs) was born on August 1, 1937, as the name of a line of antifreeze products. Mopar has since evolved over 80 years to serve as the total service, parts and customer-care brand of all FCA vehicles around the globe.

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 over 150 markets around the world. 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.

Mopar is the source for genuine parts and accessories for all FCA US LLC vehicle brands. Mopar parts are engineered together with the same teams that create factory-authorized specifications for FCA vehicles, offering a direct connection that no other aftermarket parts company can provide.

Complete information on the Mopar brand is available at www.mopar.com.

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Additional information and news from FCA US LLC is available at: <http://media.fcanorthamerica.com>