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Hagan, Pruett Advance to Second Round Monday at Indianapolis; Dodge//SRT Direct Connection Drivers Set in “Countdown” 2nd & 4th

- Track record holder Matt Hagan had a shorter day than he would have liked Monday in the 69th Dodge Power Brokers NHRA U.S. Nationals final eliminations advancing to the second round in his Dodge//SRT Direct Connection Hellcat Funny Car
- After running six impressive qualifying runs earlier in the weekend, Hagan’s nitro-burning machine defeated Alex Laughlin in round one but lost traction in the second round against Ron Capps
- Despite the early exit, Hagan, the three-time NHRA Camping World Funny Car champion, will start the six-race “NHRA Countdown” in the No. 2 position in the Funny Car points standings when the NHRA national tour competes in two weeks in Reading, Pa.
- Leah Pruett, driving the Dodge//SRT Direct Connection Top Fuel dragster for TSR, also advanced to the second round of eliminations after defeating Austin Prock in the first round
- Pruett lost traction in round two against current NHRA Top Fuel point leader Justin Ashley
- Pruett will enter the “NHRA Countdown” in two weeks in the No. 4 spot in the Top Fuel standings
- Steve Comella captured his third consecutive Dodge HEMI® Challenge in his 1968 Barracuda
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September 4, 2023, Brownsburg, IN - The tricky track conditions at the Dodge Power Brokers NHRA U.S. Nationals made it difficult for the Top Fuel and Funny Car drivers and crews Monday in the 69th edition of the “Big Go” at Lucas Oil Indianapolis Raceway Park.

Battling the higher temperatures and humid air, the Tony Stewart Racing (TSR) drivers, Leah Pruett and Matt Hagan, had impressive first round victories Monday in the Top Fuel and Funny Car eliminations, but both Dodge//SRT Direct Connection racers lost traction in the second-round action.

Hagan, the current track record holder in the TSR Direct Connection Dodge//SRT Hellcat, defeated Alex Laughlin in Monday’s opening round with a strong 3.914 to Laughlin’s 6.157 as the track surface became more difficult with additional heat in the afternoon. Hagan, the four-time 2023 NHRA national event winner, and his second-round opponent, Ron Capps, saw their cars lose traction early in their runs. But Capps clicked the win light first with a 4.582 to Hagan’s 5.146.

Despite the second-round defeat, Hagan trails Capps by just 24 points entering the “NHRA Countdown to the Championship” which begins with the next event at Reading, Pa., on Sept. 15-17. The top-ten in professional points were locked into the “Countdown” in the final six NHRA Camping World Series races.

“Leaving the Big Go, we enter the ‘Countdown to the Championship’ in the second spot,” said Hagan. “You can win the championship from anywhere. You have to be in it to win it. We have six races left, so I really want to park this Direct Connection Dodge//SRT Hellcat Funny Car back in the winner’s circle. We have to win two or three of these races to be a real title contender. It was a productive weekend as far as making good runs in the heat. Unfortunately, we didn’t have lane choice in the second round and the left lane was a bit tricky. We’ll go into the next race with guns blazing. Reading is always a fast racetrack, so we will be ready that one.”

Pruett, the Summit Nationals Top Fuel winner this year, recorded a close first round win in her Dodge//SRT Direct

Connection dragster over Austin Prock with a 3.747 to Prock's 3.777. And she faced current NHRA Top Fuel point leader Justin Ashley, who Pruett defeated in her last two matchups at Norwalk, Ohio, and Brainerd, Minn., in the second round Monday.

However, Pruett's mount lost traction early in the run and Ashley advanced to the semi-finals.

Pruett's first round victory moved her to the No. 4 position in the Top Fuel points standings, as Leah will start 58 points behind leader Ashley when the "Countdown" begins at Reading, Pa., in two weeks.

"We definitely did not leave any efforts on the table to win the world's longest and most prestigious drag race event, the Dodge Power Brokers NHRA U.S. Nationals," said Pruett. "Monday morning began with faith that any issues were solved, and tune-up was on point with one of the most meaningful rounds of the year. Seeing Brittany (Force) go out first round meant our countdown placement was directly in our hands. Those are the unique type of nerves that Indy serves. We're not letting our (second-round) loss stop our momentum. Racing Indy is the hardest feat of our crew. We're taking it as conditioning for the most important chapter of the season."

With the "Countdown" now in place, both Hagan and Pruett are anxious for the three-race NHRA national event swing late in September with events at Reading, Pa., Charlotte, N.C., and St. Louis, Mo. Hagan, a 47-time NHRA national event winner, has NHRA race victories at all three races.

In the Dodge HEMI® Challenge at the Dodge Power Brokers NHRA U.S. Nationals, Steve Comella of Rochester, N.Y., captured his third consecutive title Friday at Lucas Oil Indianapolis Raceway Park by driving his 1968 Barracuda to the final round win over Jimmy Daniels with a final round time of 8.331 to Daniels' 8.395.

For the last eight years, Daniels and Comella have practically owned the Dodge HEMI Challenge as they have combined to win seven of the last eight specialty events held each year at the Dodge Power Brokers NHRA U.S. Nationals at Indy. Daniels won four straight titles from 2016-19, while Comella earned back-to-back titles in 2021-22.

"We work all year to win this prize for one day," said Comella, who won \$15,000. "It's been 364 days since the last win at this race but now let's see how many times we can do it. We're going to enjoy it tonight and tomorrow we'll start prepping for next year."

@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.

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 a lineup that delivers unrivaled performance in each of the segments in which the brand competes while moving forward to a future that includes electrified muscle in the form of the next-generation, all-new Dodge Charger.

The next-generation Dodge Charger electrifies a legend, with the Charger retaining its title as the world's quickest and most powerful muscle car led by the all-new, all-electric 2024 Dodge Charger Daytona Scat Pack. The all-new Dodge Charger will also offer performance choices via multi-energy powertrain options, including the 550-horsepower Dodge Charger SIXPACK H.O., powered by the 3.0L Twin Turbo Hurricane High Output engine.

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.

In 2022, the Dodge brand ranked No. 1 in the [J.D. Power APEAL Study](#) (mass market), making it the only domestic brand ever to do so three years in a row. 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).

Fans can follow all the NHRA action this season at [DodgeGarage](#), the one-stop portal for Dodge//SRT and Mopar drag-racing news, including daily updates and access to an online racing HQ, news, events, galleries, available downloads and merchandise. Dodge is part of the portfolio of brands offered by leading global automaker and mobility provider [Stellantis](#) (NYSE: STLA).

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A simple combination of the words MOtor and PARts, Mopar offers exceptional service, parts and customer-care. Born in 1937 as the name of a line of antifreeze products, Mopar has evolved over more than 85 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, Mopar expanded to include technical service and customer support, and today integrates service, parts and customer-care operations in order to enhance customer and dealer support worldwide.

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