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Mopar Dodge Dart Debuts with Two Top-Five Starting Spots at NHRA Gatornationals

- 2013 NHRA Pro Stock series champ Jeg Coughlin Jr. captures the third starting position in the maiden race for his Mopar/JEGS.com Dodge Dart
- Defending NHRA Gatornationals winner Allen Johnson begins eliminations fourth in his new 'Magneti Marelli Quality Auto Parts Offered by Mopar' Dodge Dart
- Coughlin and Johnson set career-best speed records in their new Mopar-powered Dodge Dart
- Six Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car racers, led by No. 3 qualifier Jack Beckman, will fight for the Gatornationals trophy on Sunday

March 15, 2014, Gainesville, Fla. - Jeg Coughlin Jr. and Allen Johnson were confident the new Dodge Dart NHRA Pro Stock car would shine in its competition debut, and the pair demonstrated exactly why during qualifying for the 45th Annual NHRA Gatornationals. Coughlin and Johnson powered to career best speeds in their brand-new race cars and will both start in the top half of the field, third and fourth, respectively, as they aim to claim the inaugural win for the Dodge Dart during Sunday elimination rounds in Gainesville, Fla.

The Mopar teammates held their spots from Friday, when defending NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series Pro Stock champion Coughlin earned the third position based on a 6.484-second run in the very first qualifying attempt for his Mopar/JEGS.com Dodge Dart. Johnson claimed the No. 4 berth in his "Magneti Marelli Quality Auto Parts Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart with a 6.487 pass in Friday's second session, in which Coughlin also powered to a career-best speed of 214.62 mph.

Although unable to move further up the starting grid during Saturday's final two sessions, both Dodge Dart entries continued to shine. In the third session, Coughlin and Johnson qualified together in the first-ever side-by-side run of Dodge Dart Pro Stockers. Johnson was quicker and faster with a 6.495-second run at 214.04 mph, a career-best speed, and was second-quickest of the round, banking two bonus points. Teammate Coughlin posted a 6.505/213.77. In his Magneti Marelli Offered by Mopar Dart's final qualifying attempt, Johnson's 6.506/212.90 was once again second-quickest of the round, while Coughlin remained solid with a 6.516/213.00.

Coughlin will square off with Rodger Brogdon in round one in his quest for a third Gatornationals crown, and seventh finals appearance at the event. Johnson, who on Sunday seeks a repeat of his 2013 Gatornationals victory and also his second-consecutive win of the 2014 season, will meet Johnathan Gray in the opening round.

"I'm so proud of how hard my crew and the Mopar engineers and employees have worked to get this new Dodge Dart not only ready, but competing so strong right out of the gate," said Johnson. "It's been a great debut so far, and the only thing that would make it better is to see the two Dodge Dart Pro Stock cars in the final elimination, with a shot at defending my title here. That's the goal for Sunday."

V. Gaines (6.518) will start seventh in his points-leading Mopar Dodge Avenger and battle Larry Morgan to begin eliminations as he seeks his third-straight final round appearance of the season. Gaines will take delivery of his new Dodge Dart as well in few weeks. Matt Hartford (6.591) was listed 16th and will line up with No. 1 Qualifier Dave Connolly.

Seeking their first win of 2014, the Mopar-powered Dodge Charger R/T NHRA Funny Car squad was paced by Jack Beckman (4.108), who claimed the No. 3 spot and a date with recent NHRA Phoenix winner Alexis DeJoria in the opening round. His Don Schumacher Racing teammate Ron Capps (4.121) qualified sixth and will get a Mopar vs. Mopar matchup against Jeff Arend (No. 11, 4.139) to begin his day, with No. 9 starter Tommy Johnson Jr. (4.130)

lining up his DSR Dodge Charger R/T against Del Worsham.

Mopar Express Lane Dodge Charger R/T racer Matt Hagan (4.144) finished No. 12 in qualifying, with Courtney Force awaiting the 2011 Funny Car champ in round one, and Blake Alexander (No. 15, 4.292) will race his Dodge against Bob Tasca III.

Elimination rounds for the NHRA Gatornationals are scheduled to begin on Sunday at 11 a.m. (EDT). Two hours of NHRA Gatornationals qualifying coverage are scheduled to be televised on ESPN2 and ESPN2HD on Sunday beginning at 1 a.m. and then rebroadcast at 7:30 a.m. ET. Two hours of elimination rounds coverage will be broadcast on ESPN2 and ESPN2HD starting at 7 p.m. on Sunday.

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