

## **Pritchett Takes Top Fuel Win for Mopar at NHRA Brainerd, Johnson Runner-up in Funny Car Eric Bell wins Super Stock**

- Leah Pritchett wins 36th annual NHRA Nationals at Brainerd International Raceway in Papa John's Pizza/Mopar Pennzoil Top Fuel dragster
- Victory is fifth for Mopar HEMI®-power from Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) in Top Fuel this season, 17th Nitro victory for Mopar overall in 2017
- Pritchett's win is fourth of season and fifth of career
- Tommy Johnson Jr. drives to runner-up finish in Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car, his fourth final round in last five events
- Three Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Funny Cars, two Mopar-powered Top Fuel dragsters advance to at least second round
- Mopar occupies four of top five points positions in Funny Car, third and fourth in Top Fuel standings
- Eric Bell wins Super Stock in 1968 Plymouth Barracuda
- Bell wins Dodge Top Finisher award in Super Stock, Steve Scherschligt takes Stock Eliminator honors

August 20, 2017, Brainerd, Minn. - Mopar-powered Leah Pritchett dominated the Top Fuel category in the 36th annual NHRA Nationals at Brainerd International Raceway, starting with a national elapsed-time record during qualifying on Friday evening and ending with a spot in the winner's circle Sunday afternoon.

Pritchett's victory in her Papa John's Pizza/Mopar Pennzoil dragster from Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) was her fourth of the season. It was also the fifth win for Mopar HEMI® power in the Top Fuel ranks in 2017, as well as the 17th victory overall for Mopar-backed Nitro vehicles from DSR on the NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series this year.

Pritchett's DSR teammate Tommy Johnson Jr. meanwhile appeared in his fourth Funny Car final round in the last five events, but again finished just short of collecting his second win of the season in the Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T.

Eric Bell also won his first-ever national event Wally in the Sportsman ranks, taking the Super Stock win for Mopar at Brainerd in his GT/EA 1968 Plymouth Barracuda.

In Top Fuel, Pritchett defeated Antron Brown in the final round, making a lap of 3.682 seconds at 328.06 mph in the left lane to better Brown's time of 4.001 at 246.35. Pritchett got off the starting line with a .064-second reaction time compared to Brown's .040.

Pritchett's stellar weekend began with her setting a new national elapsed-time record with a pass of 3.640 seconds at 330.63 mph in qualifying on Friday evening, which ultimately put her No. 1 on Sunday's elimination ladder. She drove past Rob Passey in round one, and then took down Scott Palmer in the second round on another clean pass. The semis saw Pritchett battle a strong Clay Millican, but Millican lost cylinders as Pritchett again turned in a textbook pass, allowing her to reach the final round for the sixth time this season.

The win was the fifth of her career.

Pritchett's Mopar Top Fuel teammate, eight-time champion Tony Schumacher, started his day matched up with Troy Coughlin Jr. for the second consecutive event. Schumacher took his 800th career round win on a clean pass in a brand new U.S. Army car from DSR when Coughlin smoked his tires at the hit of the throttle. Schumacher then fell to the surging Millican in round two.

In Funny Car, Tommy Johnson Jr. and the Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T team from DSR once again carried the banner for Mopar as they have throughout the second half of the summer.

Johnson began his day by besting Jonnie Lindberg on a clean pass when Lindberg smoked his tires, setting up a showdown between Johnson and Courtney Force in round two. Johnson turned on the win light again with a solid lap as Force's engine shut off shortly after leaving the starting line. Johnson then beat Robert Hight in a wild semifinal race to reach the final round. Hight thought Johnson had turned on the red light and had trouble getting off the starting line, while Johnson lost traction and tried to keep the car off the wall as he pedaled and fishtailed down track to turn on the win light. He ultimately fell to Alexis DeJoria in the final round.

It was Johnson's fifth final-round appearance of the season, which has produced one victory.

Two of Johnson's Mopar-powered DSR Funny Car teammates, Jack Beckman and Ron Capps, advanced to the second round at Brainerd.

Beckman struggled off the line in round one in his Infinite Hero Dodge Charger R/T, but opponent Brian Stewart went red, giving Beckman a lucky break to advance to round two. His day was then ended by John Force, however, as Beckman struck the tires and was forced to pedal as Force got away.

Ron Capps put his Dodge Charger R/T past J.R. Todd on a clean, side-by-side run in round one, but was then bested by Hight.

Matt Hagan was the only Mopar-powered Funny Car driver from DSR to not advance to at least to the second round. The Mopar Pennzoil Dodge Charger R/T team had a rare mechanical issue in the form of a malfunctioning electrical cutoff switch as Hagan was backing up to the starting line after his burnout. As a result, the first-round win went to Cruz Pedregon.

The 36th annual NHRA Nationals were contested under primarily favorable conditions in front of diehard fans at the notoriously fast track in Brainerd, Minnesota. The ideal weather led to new national records during Friday's qualifying sessions and a number of very quick times throughout Sunday's elimination rounds.

#### **Mopar/Dodge Notes & Quotes**

##### **Pietro Gorlier, Head of Parts and Service (Mopar) FCA – Global**

"We couldn't be prouder of what Leah Pritchett and her Papa John's Pizza/Mopar Pennzoil team accomplished this weekend at Brainerd International Raceway. Congratulations to everyone involved on the win in the NHRA Nationals. It's exciting to watch so much hard work pay off."

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

**(No. 1 Qualifier – 3.640 seconds at 330.63 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.085-second reaction time, 3.709 seconds at 325.30 mph) defeated No. 16 Rob Passey (.105/4.321/247.75)

Rd. 2: (.077/3.715/330.63) defeated No. 8 Scott Palmer (.063/3.906/257.48)

Semis: (.072/3.666/330.88) defeated No. 5 Clay Millican (.074/3.792/263.00)

Final: (.064/3.682/328.06) defeated No. 7 Antron Brown (.040/4.001/246.35)

"Don Schumacher has given me the best team in my opinion and we keep continuing to prove that. I say we have the best team because we have the best hot rod. To go multiple times backing up our national record, doing incredible things in Denver (with a No. 1 and final round), being No. 1 (six times this year), it's absolutely amazing. The only thing that would ever be better than this is if we can keep this through all the way to the end. But right now, we're going to enjoy this win because those guys, they deserve it."

##### **Tommy Johnson Jr., Make-A-Wish Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car**

**(No. 5 Qualifier – 3.880 seconds at 329.58 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.028-second reaction time, 3.922 seconds at 328.86 mph) defeated No. 12 Jonnie Lindberg (.106/7.147/106.26)

Rd. 2: (.098/3.932/326.48) defeated No. 4 Courtney Force (.085/8.099/84.74)  
Semis: (.043/6.875/128.60) defeated No. 1 Robert Hight (.076/9.806/78.40)  
Final: (.053/3.933/324.44) lost to No. 10 Alexis DeJoria (.076/3.906/330.96)

"It's another runner-up, which is frustrating, but at the same time it's a really good thing. We made a move in the points today, got ourselves in the top four and one of these days if we continue to run like that, that runner-up's going to become a win. I'd love nothing more than to do that at Indy or in the Countdown (to the Championship). We're saving all those wins I guess. But I have a really good team, a really consistent car and just can't get a little bit of luck in the final. Other than that we have a really good team that I think is going to be tough to deal with."

**Matt Hagan, Mopar Pennzoil Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car**  
**(No. 2 Qualifier – 3.807 seconds at 336.57 mph)**

Rd. 1: (no time - mechanical) lost to No. 15 Cruz Pedregon (.087/5.714/128.92)

"It's the second time in my career (the kill switch) messed some runs up. At the end of the day it was a faulty wire that caused that (the car shutting off). Backing up on the burnout obviously it just quit, and that's an eerie feeling. It's not something that we really had control over and knew about. There was nothing we could do so we pushed the car off and I guess we'll head to Indy."

**Jack Beckman, Infinite Hero Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car**  
**(No. 6 Qualifier – 3.886 seconds at 333.25 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.091-second reaction time, 4.290 seconds at 207.56 mph) defeated No. 11 Brian Stewart (no show – red light)  
Rd. 2: (.057/9.505/72.67) lost to No. 3 John Force (.038/3.896/335.48)

"We're okay, we're solidly in the Countdown but we want to win Indy, and we still have a chance to move up a position or two before they re-set the Countdown points. So we will work our tails off Wednesday and Thursday (during testing at Lucas Oil Raceway), and flog this car, and make sure we exorcise our demons. I am not superstitious but we just had a whole bunch of dumb racing luck here at Brainerd. We'll get that out of our system and move forward."

**Ron Capps, NAPA Dodge Charger R/T Funny Car**  
**(No. 8 Qualifier – 3.928 seconds at 325.14 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.079-second reaction time, 3.894 seconds at 330.96 mph) defeated No. 9 J.R. Todd (.052/3.973/323.35)  
Rd. 2: (.060/3.938/304.80) lost to No. 1 Robert Hight (.076/3.828/336.23)

"This is a great tune-up for the Countdown as far as the track conditions: cool conditions, a great racetrack, and we're going to see a lot of that later in the Countdown. The big points lead that we've had throughout the summer swing really allowed to do some things and try some things we've been wanting to try under race conditions. It's unfortunate we lost to (Robert) Hight's team, we're going to see that matchup a lot this year. I have a feeling the championship's going to have to go through that team as well as my teammates."

**Tony Schumacher, U.S. Army Top Fuel Dragster**  
**(No. 4 Qualifier – 3.695 seconds at 329.42 mph)**

Rd. 1: (.071-second reaction time, 3.711 seconds at 324.67 mph) defeated No. 13 Troy Coughlin Jr. (.086/16.216/22.28)  
Rd. 2: (.058/3.718/327.66) lost to No. 5 Clay Millican (.070/3.658/330.47)

"That was quite the run Clay (Millican) and his boys put together. They've been running well. We were actually targeting a .67 (3.67 seconds) but had a little something go wrong with the clutch that we haven't figured out yet. It would've won that race and put us in the semis. But, so far so good with our new car after its first six runs. It's a championship-caliber car, in my opinion, and that's our goal every year. This new car is fast, it's consistent, and I think we're headed to the right race with the right car at the right time. We're all getting confident."

## **Mopar/Dodge NHRA Sportsman Spotlight**

Massive fields participated in the Sportsman categories at the NHRA Nationals, with Eric Bell taking the Super Stock victory for Mopar in his GT/EA 1968 Plymouth Barracuda.

Bell, a former professional baseball player from Chandler, Arizona, won his first ever national event Wally in his Plymouth powered by a 440 cubic-inch engine when his opponent, Darrell Dietz, went red at the starting line in the final. Bell proceeded to make a lap of 9.301 seconds at 127.10 mph on a 9.22 dial-in. He left with a remarkable .007-second reaction time.

"This is definitely tough to do, I've been at it a long time," said Bell, who also qualified No. 1. "I had a couple rounds where my lights weren't that great, but luckily I got by those rounds and then my driving came along in the last few rounds and it all worked out."

In Stock Eliminator, Steve Scherschligt of Tea, South Dakota, turned in the best performance for Mopar. Scherschligt made a series of consistent runs to advance to the third round in an H/SA 1973 Plymouth Satellite, where he finally bowed out after an 11.256-second pass on an 11.24 dial-in. Scherschligt reached a top speed of 115.36 mph and left the starting line with a .108-second reaction time in the round.

Bell and Scherschligt were each named the Dodge Top Finisher at Brainerd. The program, new for 2017, awards \$500 to the Stock and Super Stock competitors who advance the farthest in a Dodge or Plymouth vehicle. The award is in place at all 24 NHRA national events and supplements Mopar's long-running contingency program.

Super Stock and Stock Eliminator drivers also competed for class wins at Brainerd, with several Mopar-powered cars taking wins.

In Super Stock, Rick Johnson of Wayzata, Minnesota, claimed the GT/AA win in a '68 Plymouth Barracuda, Bell won GT/EA in his '68 'Cuda, Ham Lake, Minnesota's Brad Haugaard took the GT/IA victory in an '06 Dodge Stratus, and Chuck Lofgren from Cedar, Minnesota, won FSS/H with his '10 Dodge Challenger.

Three Mopar-powered machines meanwhile claimed class wins in Stock. Mason City, Iowa's T.J. Diekema drove his '62 Plymouth Fury to the D/SA class victory, Corey Hopkins of North Branch, Minnesota, won G/SA in a '69 Dodge Dart, and Scherschligt took home the H/SA win driving his '73 Plymouth Satellite.

## **Next Event**

The NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series is next in action on Labor Day Weekend for the 63rd annual U.S. Nationals: the most prestigious drag race in the world. Slated for August 30 – September 4 at Lucas Oil Raceway near Indianapolis, the event will also feature the 17th edition of the popular Mopar HEMI Challenge and the Traxxas Nitro Shootout for race winners.

Last year Mopar driver Matt Hagan won the U.S. Nationals in the Funny Car category, while his Mopar teammate Tony Schumacher took home the victory in Top Fuel. Schumacher has won the event a record 10 times, while Hagan and fellow DSR driver Jack Beckman each have one victory in Funny Car at the historic race.

Long known as "The Big Go," the U.S. Nationals will receive coverage from FOX Sports 1 throughout the weekend, with the opening elimination rounds airing LIVE on the network at 11 a.m. ET on Monday, September 4. Later that afternoon the FOX Network will pick up the broadcast at 1 p.m. ET and will continue through the finals.

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

## **2017 NHRA Championship — Point Standings After Round 17 of 24**

(Season Wins in Parentheses)

### **NHRA Funny Car**

- 1. Ron Capps, Dodge Charger R/T (6) – 1,383**
2. Robert Hight (2) – 1,247
- 3. Matt Hagan, Dodge Charger R/T (3) – 1,214**

**4. Tommy Johnson Jr., Dodge Charger R/T (1) – 1,180**

**5. Jack Beckman, Dodge Charger R/T (2) – 1,160**

6. Courtney Force – 1,012
7. John Force (1) – 954
8. Tim Wilkerson – 792
9. J.R. Todd (1) – 788
10. Alexis DeJoria (1) – 664

**NHRA Top Fuel**

1. Antron Brown (4) – 1,513
2. Steve Torrence (6) – 1,482
- 3. Leah Pritchett, Mopar HEMI (4) – 1,453**
- 4. Tony Schumacher, Mopar HEMI (1) – 1,121**
5. Brittany Force (1) – 1,052
6. Doug Kalitta – 1,038
7. Clay Millican (1) – 1,014
8. Terry McMillen – 722
9. Scott Palmer – 679
10. Troy Coughlin Jr. – 576

**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

**Mopar**

Mopar is the global name for Stellantis genuine parts and authentic accessories.

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.

Complete information on Mopar is available at [www.mopar.com](http://www.mopar.com) and the Mopar blog at [www.blog.mopar.com](http://www.blog.mopar.com). For more information regarding Stellantis (NYSE: STLA), please visit [www.stellantis.com](http://www.stellantis.com).

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