

Johnson Wins All-Mopar Final at NHRA Arizona Nationals

Gaines Takes Championship Lead for the First Time in His 21- Year Career

- All-Mopar Pro Stock final sees Johnson emerge the victor at Wild Horse Pass Motorsports Park for the NHRA Arizona Nationals
- HEMI-powered V. Gaines takes the lead in the NHRA Pro Stock points standings for the first time in his 21-year career with back-to back final round appearances
- Funny Car driver Tommy Johnson Jr. is top finishing DSR Dodge Charger R/T with semi-final round appearance
- Dodge Avenger will be retired with new Mopar Pro Stock car to debut at next NHRA event in Gainesville, Fla.

February 23, 2014, Chandler, Ariz. - It was an all-Mopar Pro Stock final elimination at the NHRA Arizona Nationals with Allen Johnson posting his 21st career win by emerging the victor over V. Gaines at Wild Horse Pass Motorsports Park. Gaines, despite runner-up finish, took the lead in the Pro Stock points standings for the first time in his 21-year career after back-to back final round appearances.

In a rematch of their last duel at the 2013 Mopar Mile High Nationals, Johnson earned his second title win at Phoenix (2005) by beating Gaines with a 6.543 second elapsed time run at 212.23 miles per hour.

"I have a great Mopar Express Lane crew that kept digging and wouldn't give up after we struggled a little early on and got behind in qualifying," said Johnson who qualified sixth and rebounded from a first round lost in the season opener at the Winternationals. "Pomona was probably my worst personal performance in 18 years and it p*ssed me off to be honest and I wanted to make it right. I still didn't do my best here as I was responsible for one round-win, and my crew was responsible for the other three."

"V [Gaines] is a class act and running really good in a Mopar as of late and he's going to be tough all year long," added Johnson who jumps into a tie for third place with Vincent Nobile in the points behind Gaines and Jason Line. "I'm only here because we have a great crew. They worked and got it right, and this is a great way to send this Mopar Express Lube Dodge Avenger out on a winning note."

Not only was the Mopar final round showdown a fitting way to say farewell to the Dodge Avenger which will be retired following this event to make room for a new Pro Stock Dodge premiering at the next NHRA event in three weeks, but it came exactly 50 years after the first introduction of the GEN II 426 Race HEMI with a win by Richard Petty at NASCAR's 1964 Daytona 500.

"Congratulations to Allen [Johnson] for a great win in Phoenix with the HEMI-powered Dodge Avenger," said Pietro Gorlier, President and CEO of Mopar, Chrysler Group's service, parts and customer-care brand. "Allen and the Mopar Express Lane team haven't stopped working and building on the successes of last two years and have set the bar even higher this season. What better way than to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the legendary 426 race HEMI engine than to drive it to the winner's circle in defense of our championships amid tough competition this year."

Defending NHRA Pro Stock Champ Jeg Coughlin Jr didn't have the weekend he was hoping for in the JEGS.com Mopar and saw it cut short with a first round loss to Dave Connelly.

"We really never got up with it," said Coughlin, who falls to eighth in the standings. "We just didn't run well on Friday, and we thought we came around a little bit Saturday but today we just had a little bit more of the same as Friday. We'll look forward to Gainesville where we're going to pull the tarp off of a brand-new car that all the folks at Mopar, Dodge, and Chrysler are excited to show the world. That's going to be our new breath."

In Funny Car action, No. 2 qualifier Tommy Johnson Jr. carried the Mopar banner for Don Schumacher Racing by making his way to the semifinals to face challenger Robert Hight after dispensing with Tony Pedregon and Tim Wilkerson.

The Make-A-Wish Mopar machine's 4.08-second elapsed time run, however, wasn't quite enough for Hight's 4.04 sec pass but with his performance this weekend, Johnson moves into the fourth place spot in the Funny Car points standings.

It was a tough all-Mopar first round match-up between DSR teammates Jack Beckman and Matt Hagan. Beckman emerged the winner to face Robert Hight in a battle that saw his 4.127 e.t defeated by a 4.059 sec. run.

Ron Capps met a similar fate as his teammate Hagan with his own first round loss after hazing the tires in a match up with Bob Tasca. The Funny Car title was won by first time winner Alexis DeJoria.

Mopar drivers and teams now prepare to head to the next NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing series event in Gainesville, Fla. on March 13-16 for the the Amalie Motor Oil Gatornationals.

2014 NHRA Championship Points Standings (Following Qualifying at Arizona Nationals – NHRA Event 2 of 24)

PRO STOCK (season wins in parentheses)

- 1. V. Gaines – Dodge Avenger – 191**
2. Jason Line – 180 (1)
- 3t. Allen Johnson – Dodge Avenger – 161 (1)**
- 3t. Vincent Nobile – 161
5. Dave Connolly – 128
6. Shane Gray – 127
7. Erica Enders Stevens – 120
- 8. Jeg Coughlin Jr. – Dodge Avenger 88**
- 9t. Larry Morgan – 82
- 9t. Shane Tucker - 82
11. Chris McGaha – 75

FUNNY CAR (season wins in parentheses)

1. John Force – 225
2. Robert Hight – 159
3. Alexis DeJoria – 156
- 4. Tommy Johnson Jr. – Dodge Charger R/T – 136**
5. Del Worsham – 132
- 6. Matt Hagan – Dodge Charger R/T – 129**
7. Bob Tasca III – 124
- 8. Jack Beckman – Dodge Charger R/T– 92**
- 9. Ron Capps – Dodge Charger R/T – 88**
10. Tim Wilkerson – 84

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