

Tony Stewart, Team Owner

“This was an awesome weekend for us in Gainesville at the Gator Nationals. Matt’s win is the anniversary of our very first team win in the nitro division, so what an awesome weekend. We couldn’t ask for more. Dickie Venables’ birthday is today, so what an awesome way to celebrate. We have two other team members with birthdays this week. We’re really big on birthdays and we’re one team, all team. You can’t win them all if you don’t win the first one, so we got the first one in the books. Leah and her team did an awesome job making it to the Semifinals. What a transformation from a year ago when we missed the show. What a difference a year makes. I’m really proud of everyone at TSR.”

Dickie Venables, Crew Chief

“Every winter we look at what we can do better. So, we looked at the equipment and we had a new chassis that was a different design. Plus, we had a few new engine parts too. We came down to Gainesville to test and we made 14 test runs. It showed a lot of promise, and it finally came together at the end of testing. We thought we had something better than last year. Sometimes it doesn’t work out that way. We know Matt (Hagan) will drive the wheels off the car and it’s a great way to start the season. Matt had to get used to a new chassis and so do we on the crew side. The timing into the final round was a little tight. They had a TV window they needed to get to and we had about 50 minutes before the final. Our guys just knocked it out of the park preparing for the final.”

Leah Pruett, Driver of the Dodge Direct Connection Top Fuel Dragster

“This weekend was quite a turnaround for our Direct Connection TSR Top Fuel team after not competing last year here. It’s a testament to where we left off in 2022. We actually ran 24 test passes this winter. We took a hybrid of all of our test runs to come into this weekend. There wasn’t one run of the 24 that we thought was the perfect setting. We took a hybrid of many tests to get to where we were this weekend. The TSR crew did a great job putting a setup together for our car. The track was very unique this weekend. It was good after the starting line, but the line was very tricky. Because we were able to go through those types of challenges in testing, that really helped us this weekend. I couldn’t be more proud of the Direct Connection team. This event was good for momentum going to Phoenix, the site of my first NHRA Top Fuel win. This was a great weekend for the fans and the huge crowd here. We are excited with Matt’s Funny Car win for the team this weekend. Back-to-back wins at Gainesville is a great start for Tony Stewart Racing and the Direct Connection teams. These Sublime green machines are so cool looking and fast too.”



Matt Hagan, Driver of the Dodge Direct Connection Charger SRT Hellcat Funny Car

“It’s super special to win the Gator Nationals again. I tried my whole career to win here, and we just got the first one last year. Can’t say enough about Dickie Venables (crew chief) and the crew today. It’s Dickie’s birthday and this win is a present for him. We had the entire crew come back this year which is rare in motorsports. We have a new chassis which I had to get accustomed to with a different steering setup and clutch position in the new car, but testing helped me get used to it. We thought we had a good car after testing and it says a lot with Dickie’s experience and the crew’s effort. I knew J.R. (Todd) was going to be tough in the final, and he poked his nose out ahead a bit early and then we drove around him for the win. I can’t thank Dodge and Mopar for their assistance with our TSR squad. The Direct Connection Dodge SRT Charger Hellcat ran awesome today. It was great to win Tony’s first Wally here last year and this one is very special too. It’s different to start the whole season at Gainesville after decades at Pomona. The crowd here was just spectacular. It took me two hours to get into the track on Saturday. It was a sellout. Winning my 44th NHRA national event is very special when you have legends like John Force, Ron Capps and Robert Hight in front of me. I’m younger than those guys but it feels great to have that many wins. For the past several years, it’s been those guys and several others for the title at the end of the year. Now, with this win, it’s a super way to start the 2023 season. We hope to continue it next race at Phoenix.”

