

switching gears

In the ever-changing landscape of the Team Mopar NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing contingent, it helps to have a scorecard to keep track of comings and goings. Here's what's new for the 2015 season.

FOUR HORSEMEN

Along with defending champ Matt Hagan (whose ride will sport new Mopar Express Lane graphics), Don Schumacher Racing teammates Tommy Johnson Jr., Jack Beckman and Ron Capps will also take the reins of all-new 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T Funny Cars.

SEASONED VET, FRESH LOOK

Marking his 20th season behind the wheel of a Mopar Pro Stocker, 2012 Pro Stock champ Allen Johnson gets new yellow-and-black colors on his "Magneti Marelli Quality Auto Parts Offered by Mopar" Dodge Dart.

DIFFERENT TUNE

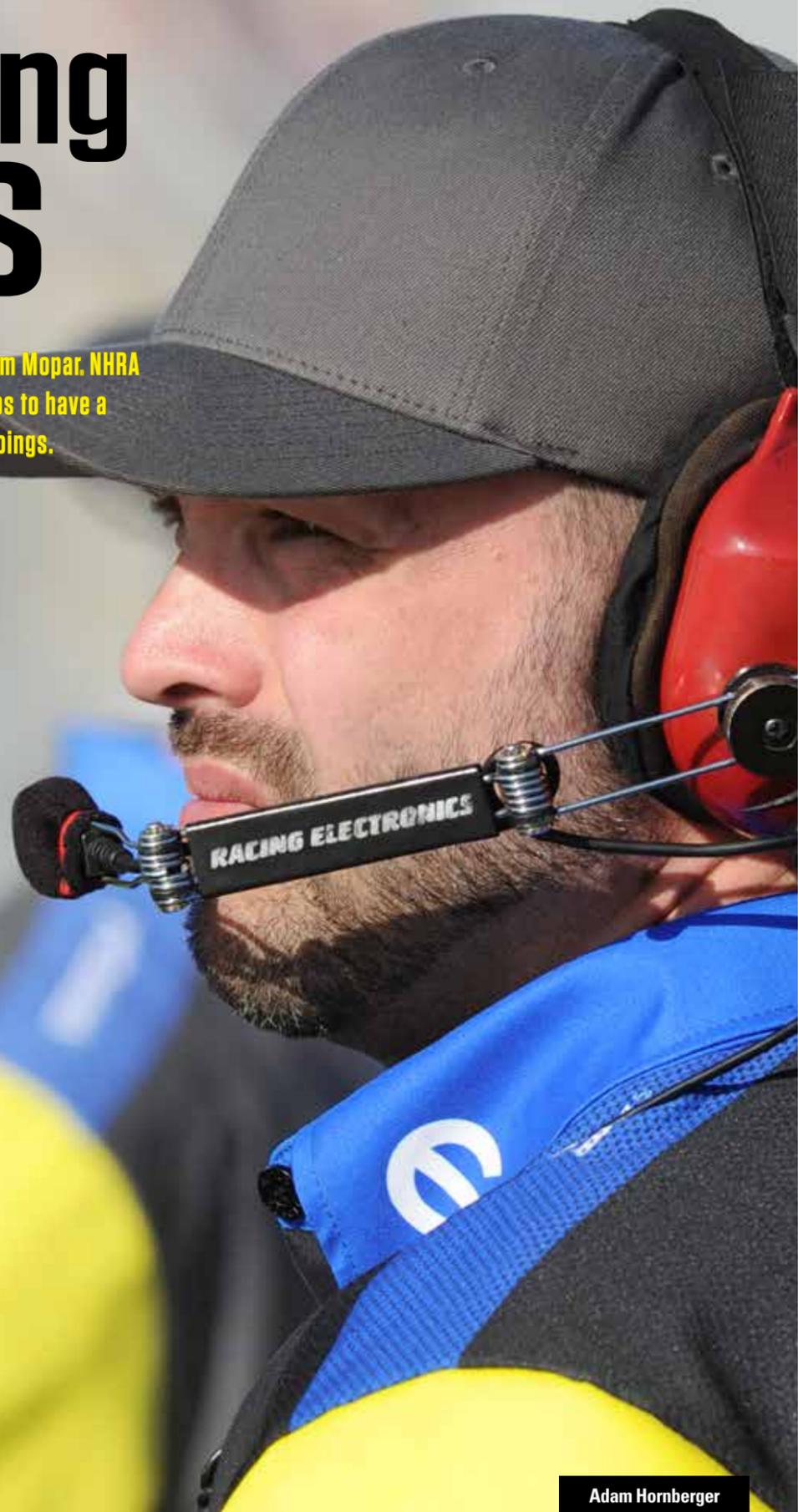
Adam Hornberger, Jeg Coughlin Jr.'s crew chief last season, will assume the same role for Allen Johnson's Magneti Marelli Mopar Dart in 2015, with help from car chief Mike Gott and assistant crew chief Mike Earl.

FAMILY LEAVE

After he and wife Samantha welcomed a newborn baby, 2013 Pro Stock champ Jeg Coughlin Jr. will take a hiatus from the NHRA Mello Yello series grind. Look for Coughlin to possibly compete at select NHRA Sportsman events in his Mopar Dodge Challenger Drag Pak.

BACK ON BOARD

After a wreck during September's NHRA Charlotte stop forced V. Gaines to switch from his Dodge Dart to a Dodge Avenger, the 10-year Team Mopar pro will once again return to a Dart cockpit.



Adam Hornberger

OPENING STATEMENT

2x
CHAMP

Matt Hagan just made history, becoming the first driver to win a race in the all-new 2015 Mopar Dodge Charger R/T body. Hagan outran teammate Ron Capps in an all-Mopar final round at the NHRA Winternationals in Pomona, California. In the competition debut for the new body, Hagan overcame a starting spot in the bottom part of the field and an engine explosion during qualifying. Despite being forced to use a backup 2015 car to begin his championship defense, he captured his first Winter-nationals event title.

The win represents the triumphant culmination of a yearlong commitment in which the Mopar brand, along with FCA US LLC engineers and additional personnel, worked hand-in-hand with Don Schumacher Racing (DSR) drivers and teams to validate, test and create a more durable, driver-friendly machine. A machine that also features enhanced styling cues from the 2015 production Dodge Charger.



VINTAGE MUSCLE + MODERN POWER

The sport of drag racing is all about innovation and creativity, but every once in a while certain cars and teams stand above. A spectacular 1968 Plymouth Barracuda campaigned by the father-and-son team



of Jeff and Eric Bardekoff is a prime example.

Based out of Commack, New York, the Bardekoff team has been turning the heads of both fans and competitors since first debuting their finished product during the

2013 season. The car has been enormously successful since its inaugural campaign, winning awards and setting NHRA national records.

The usual, and most immediate, conclusion would be that the car carries a Mopar 426 HEMI engine and competes in the SS/AH NHRA Sportsman category, along with other '68 'Cuda and Dodge Dart vehicles. But, that perception changes considering the car runs within NHRA Super Stock in the GT/FA class, and the Barracuda is a very innovative melding of chassis and engine programs —

the Bardekoffs utilize a modern day 360 CID Mopar Dodge Drag Pak motor within their classic-looking machine.

"When we bought this car, the intention was to turn it into a Super Stocker," says Jeff Bardekoff. "Our strategy was to find the best engine combo we could for it, and we decided on the Drag Pak motor. That was a great choice. It fit perfectly into our Barracuda project and it's been totally reliable."

After acquiring the car from a seller in Kentucky, a meticulous two-year construction phase followed. The car was put on a rotisserie and stripped down to the very last nut and bolt. Pete Zawadski formed the car's chassis and roll cage, while Jeff Lawrence and Billy Marshall were tasked with the engine program that included additional input from Doug Fazzolare.

After the Bardekoffs completed the assembly themselves, the race car had a graphics scheme and paint applied by Frank Sergi and Jay McHugh at Commack Auto Body. The ultimate look earned immediate praise — including the highly prestigious "Best Appearing" award at the NHRA Nationals event held in Reading, Pennsylvania.