



# Hemi: A History of Chrysler's Iconic V-8 In Competition

*Geoff Stunkard*

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The Chrysler HEMI is arguably the most iconic American V-8 in competition history. Employing a talented team of engineers, Chrysler refined the hemispherical combustion chamber design and created an engine that produced spectacular performance. Whether the Hemi was installed in a Charger, Super Bee, Barracuda, Road Runner, or any number of other cars, the engine literally dominated NHRA, NASCAR, and other forms of competition. Installed in production cars between 1966-1971, the Hemi also became one of the most feared engines on the street.

Author and researcher Geoff Stunkard retraces this fascinating competition history and covers the Hemi's big wins, many championships, and key developments in the engine's life. Beginning with the initial World War II fighter plane prototype and racing exploits of the first-generation Hemi of the 1950s, he continues with a behind-the-scenes retrospective of the mammoth effort and resources that went into designing the 426 Hemi in 1963. In just eight months, Race Coordinator Tom Hoover and other engineers took the 426 Hemi from drawing board to racetrack. In NASCAR competition, the 426 Hemi debuted at the 1964 Daytona 500, where a young Richard Petty qualified second, lapped the entire field, and won the race. By the end of the 1964 Grand National season, Hemi-powered cars had amassed 26 race victories. As the decade progressed, NASCAR stars such as Petty, Bobby Isaac, Buddy Baker and David Pearson piloted the 426 Hemi-equipped Charger 500, Charger Daytona, Plymouth Superbird, and other Chrysler stock cars to many victories and championships. Identical attention is given to the triumphs and challenges of Don Garlits, Dick Landy, Sox and Martin, and other drag racers in NHRA and AHRA racing. It is all brought to life in narrative form, broken down by the engine's year-to-year evolution, with sidebar data on never-released engine designs, speed run records and closed-course speed records at the Bonneville Salt Flats, and more.

Beyond Chrysler's own racing and street marketing efforts, Stunkard takes care to do comparative descriptions of its battles against the Ford SOHC and other Total Performance programs and the COPO Chevrolet packages within their racing contexts. From Super Stock politics to fire-breathing Top Fuel and Funny Car efforts, from the USAC stock car series to world records on the banked turns of Talladega, it is here. The Hemi took many drivers to the winner's circle and into the history books before the sanctioning bodies basically legislated it out of competition from many of those fields. This entire racing era, showcasing both its triumphs and tragedies, featuring Richard Petty, Bobby Isaac, Ronnie Sox, Dick Landy, Don Garlits, and countless others are brought back to life in the pages of *Hemi: A History of Chrysler's Iconic V-8 in Competition*. Making use of hundreds of previously unpublished color photographs, rare factory parts and paperwork, and the recollections of many of the principals mentioned above during Stunkard's quarter-century of dedicated Chrysler racing research and interviews, this comprehensive Hemi racing history features never-before-published-or-organized information. It is a must-have for every Mopar fan and anybody interested in the glorious era of 1960s American auto racing.

NOTE: This book is a 2015 International Automotive Media Competition (IAMC) Bronze Medal Winner.

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