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Comella Drives '68 Cuda to Victory at 20th Anniversary Dodge HEMI® Challenge

- No.1 qualifier Steve Comella drove his 1968 Plymouth Barracuda to the winner's circle after a dominant performance in the 20th anniversary edition of the Dodge HEMI® Challenge at Lucas Oil Raceway during the 2021 Dodge//SRT NHRA U.S. Nationals
- Comella followed up his runner-up finish at last year's event with his first career win in the longest running, continuous, specialty race in NHRA history showcasing HEMI-powered Super Stock 1968 Dodge Darts and Plymouth Barracudas in head-to-head battles
- Comella defeated Jim Daniels Jr., a four-time Dodge HEMI Challenge winner, in an exciting final elimination battle to earn the uniquely crafted 42.5 lb. Dodge HEMI Challenge trophy and \$15,000 winner's prize
- Defending winner Stephen Yantus III earned the NHRA's special award for "Best Appearing Car" at the 67th annual Dodge//SRT U.S. Nationals

September 4, 2021, Indianapolis, IN - The 20th anniversary edition of the Dodge HEMI® Challenge saw a new winner crowned at Lucas Oil Raceway as a determined Steve Comella drove his 1968 Plymouth Barracuda from a runner-up finish in last year's event to earn his first victory at longest running, continuous, specialty race in National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) history.

Comella earned the victory at the fan-favorite classic muscle car competition from the No. 1 qualifier position with a dominant performance through eliminations to advance to an exciting final where he defeated Jim Daniels Jr., four-time (2016-2019) Dodge HEMI Challenge winner. He drove his iconic Super Stock '68 Cuda to an elapsed timed (E.T.) run of 8.364 seconds at 161.17 mph to beat his opponent's 8.423 sec/ 158.02 mph pass under the lights at Lucas Oil Raceway in a late night showdown during the 67th annual Dodge//SRT NHRA U.S. Nationals on Friday.

On his drive to the winner's circle, Comella battled head-to-head against Steve Kent and inaugural event winner Bucky Hess, and had a semifinal solo run when defending event winner Stephen Yantus III wasn't able to make the start due to a mechanical issue. In the final against Daniels and his vintage '68 Dodge Dart, Comella overcame his opponent's early lead by chasing him down and turning on the win lights with a 0.0202-second margin of victory.

Highlights of Comella's performance through five elimination rounds included a lightning 0.001-second reaction time and a trio of 8.3-second runs, the last of which gave him low E.T. and top speed of the event. His efforts were rewarded with the coveted custom-made 42.6-lb. trophy crafted from a 426 HEMI cylinder head, a \$15,000 award, and the immense satisfaction that comes with a first career win.

"At the moment I'm exhausted, but this means a lot," said Comella, who finished runner-up to Yantus in last year's edition of the Dodge HEMI Challenge and has previously earned two runner-up finishes in overall NHRA Super Stock competition. "We've been chasing this for a while. Last year kind of felt like a stone in the shoe all year, so we decided to really kind of put everything into [this race] this year. It was a lot of work and here it (the trophy) is."

While last year's winner Yantus saw his efforts to defend his title come to an end in the semifinals, his '68 Barracuda came away from the Dodge//SRT U.S. Nationals as a winner after being presented with NHRA's special award for "Best Appearing Car".

Fans can also look for highlights of the 20th anniversary Dodge HEMI Challenge during NHRA coverage of the 67th annual Dodge//SRT U.S. Nationals on Sunday Sept. 5, on FS1 from 11 a.m.- 1 p.m. and on the FOX national broadcast network from 1 - 4 p.m. EDT.

DodgeGarage: Digital Hub for Drag Racing News

Fans can follow all the NHRA action this season at DodgeGarage, the one-stop portal for Dodge//SRT and Mopar drag-racing news. The site includes daily updates and access to an online racing HQ, news, events, galleries, available downloads and merchandise. For more information, visit www.dodgegarage.com.

@DodgeMoparMotorsports on Instagram

The @DodgeMoparMotorsports Instagram channel continues to share content capturing Dodge//SRT Mopar drivers on the track. Fans can see action from the NHRA Camping World Drag Racing Series and NHRA Sportsman grassroots racers, competing in classes such as Factory Stock Showdown, Stock and Super Stock, as well as additional motorsports series.

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Mopar (a simple contraction of the words MOTO and PARTS) offers exceptional service, parts and customer care. Born in 1937 as the name of a line of antifreeze products, the Mopar brand has evolved over more than 80 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, the brand expanded to include technical service and customer support. Today, Mopar integrates service, parts and customer-care operations in order to enhance customer and dealer support worldwide.

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Dodge//SRT

For more than 100 years, the Dodge brand has carried on the spirit of brothers John and Horace Dodge. Their influence continues today as Dodge shifts into high gear with muscle cars and SUVs that deliver unrivaled performance in each of the segments where they compete.

2021 marks the year that Dodge is distilled into a pure performance brand, offering Hellcat-powered, 700-plus-horsepower SRT versions of every model across the lineup. For the 2021 model year, Dodge delivers the drag-strip dominating 807-horsepower Dodge Challenger SRT Super Stock, the new 797-horsepower Dodge Charger SRT Redeye, the most powerful and fastest mass-produced sedan in the world, and the new 710-horsepower Dodge Durango SRT Hellcat, the most powerful SUV ever. Combined, these three muscle cars make Dodge the industry's most powerful brand, offering more horsepower than any other American brand across its entire lineup.

In 2020, Dodge was named the "[#1 Brand in Initial Quality](#)," making it the first domestic brand ever to rank No. 1 in the J.D. Power Initial Quality Study (IQS). The Dodge brand also [ranked No. 1](#) in the J.D. Power APEAL Study (mass market). These results are historic because it marks the first time a domestic brand has earned top spots in both J.D. Power studies in the same year.

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