

Exterior Sheet Metal, Trim and Glass

The bodies of the 1968 Hemi Darts and Barracudas were unit construction and there was no frame. The rear suspension was attached to longitudinal members of the body while the front suspension and engine assembly were attached to the front K-member that bolted to the front sub frame. Because of this type of construction, the strength of the entire car was dependent upon the strength of the body, floor and side member components.

The Dart and Barracuda bodies were very similar in basic construction but differed in a number of areas. The most obvious difference is the wheelbase. The Dart had a 111-inch wheelbase while the Barracuda had 108-inches. The Dart and Barracuda also used different doors, front fenders and hood. The Barracuda Super Stock was based on the fastback sport hardtop body (29) while the Dart was based on a sport coupe (two-door hardtop) body (23). Although the wheelbase was shorter, the Barracuda weighed about 95 pounds more than the Dart due to the roof design and rear window weight. These body styles were chosen because Chrysler Corporation marketing wanted to push sales of the more expensive and profitable sport hardtops rather than the low line Dart 270 sedan or standard Barracuda sport coupe (even though the Dart two-door sedan weighed about 15 pounds less and was more rigid). The shorter wheelbase probably made this chassis strength less important than it was with the 1965 cars and their 115-inch wheelbase.

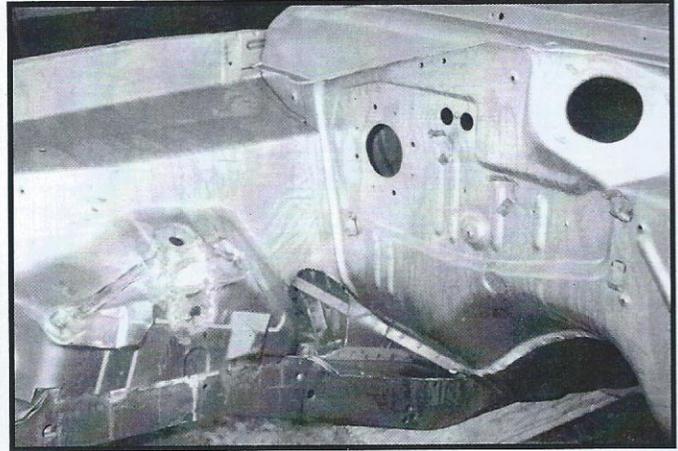
The rear chassis of the 1968 Hemi Dart and Barracuda was reinforced with torque boxes (front floor pan to rear floor pan adapters, part numbers 2604902-3), like the ones used on the 1966-1970 B-body Hemi and convertibles. The torque boxes were actually standard with the 1968-1969 Dart GTS and Barracuda S chassis (S/Code D62 with 367) and consisted of a square steel box welded in front of the rear spring front hanger mounting. The torque box was welded between the body side rails and frame side rails.

The body shell used for the 1968 Hemi Super Stock package, as produced, was essentially identical to that used on a standard car except that the hood, doors, rear seat and backrest brackets were deleted or removed and all sound deadener, sealer and insulation were deleted. There were no differences in the dome light switch holes, as there were in 1965, as dome lights were included in the 1968 bodies. The bodies were not lightened or modified in any way other than the right side fender well which will be covered later. The outer rear wheel openings of the Dart were modified at Hurst (which will also be discussed later).

When the bodies were built at the assembly plant, the headlining, visors, inside mirror, dome light, and windshield wipers were installed. The bare gray primed body was painted gloss black in the interior of the trunk compartment and interior window moldings. The door jambs were painted gloss black prior to installation of the interior trim. In the trim and final assembly departments, the side windows, carpets, window regulators, interior trim panels and all sound deadener, dum dum and insulation were deleted.

The one important physical modification to the body for the 1968 Hemi Super Stock cars was the right shock tower area of the fender well shield. There was no special panel as there was in 1964 and 1965. The engine side of the fender well shield just above the control arm mounting area was modified by beating it in with a larger hammer

and cutting two short horizontal slashes in the fender well that were brazed back together to make room for the width of the Hemi engine. This was not a neatly done modification and the original work looks very crude. The fender well rework instructions were provided by Bob Tarozzi of Central Engineering. The left side was not modified in any way. The only other noticeable change in the engine compartment was the steel cover for the deleted heater motor (part number 2216776) and gasket (part number 2292925). The plate was held in place on the engine side of the firewall with four Phillips head screws and painted black with the firewall. There were also two small black rubber plugs (part number 2094985) for the unused heater connection holes in the firewall.



This is a detail view of the right side inner fender well and shock tower of a 1968 Hemi Dart. The body is stripped to bare steel to more easily see the modifications. The panel was split horizontally, pushed in and then brazed back together. This is the Speedwin Automotive 1968 Dart under restoration and this is the original metal work. Photo courtesy of Muscle Car Restorations.

The standard steel doors were deleted at the assembly plant and replaced with standard doors that had been acid dipped (chemically milled) to reduce their weight. The total weight reduction for the dipped doors was about twenty-five pounds. The fluid sound deadener (part number 2242085) was also deleted during assembly of the doors. The steel panels were about 0.026-inch thickness compared to about 0.039/.040-inch thickness of the standard doors, reducing their overall weight by about 35 percent. The part numbers for the lightweight Dart doors were 2836880 (right) and 2836881 (left). The lightweight Barracuda doors were part numbers 2836882 (right) and 2836883 (left). Since standard doors were used and left side outside mirrors were standard in 1968, the holes for the outside mirror were still in the outer door panel. The primed lightweight doors were supposed to be installed at the Hamtramck Assembly Plant according to engineering instructions, but they were actually sent to the Hurst facility and installed there. The lightweight doors were shipped to the Hurst facility already primed in light gray primer. A 4" x 4" daub of orange paint was placed on the inside door panels near the remote control handle for identification purposes. The left outside mirror holes were covered with a chrome-plated beveled cover (part number 2860748) and gasket (part number 2860749) with washer (part number 446420) and nut (part number 9420620). The doors were mounted on standard steel hinges.

The doors were supposed to be installed at the assembly plant without the standard window regulator mechanism or handle but they were actually shipped to the Hurst facility later. The original