

NEW BOOKS

The Master Driver of the World

THE 1914 CACTUS DERBY
MARK DILL, AUTHOR

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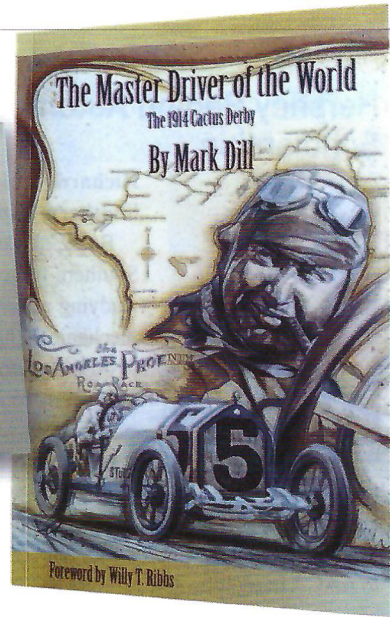
125 pages, 6" x 9", softcover, 13 b/w images, 2 route maps

\$22; Kindle \$8

Until Mark Dill wrote and published *The Master Driver of the World: The 1914 Cactus Derby*, it was Bill Nolan's biography *Barney Oldfield: The Life and Times of America's Legendary Speed King* that had been the single best resource about the legend. Although Dill uses the 1914 Cactus Derby competition as his book's *raison d'être*, interspersed are chapters that flashback to prior aspects of Oldfield's life.

Your commentator noticed differences between the Nolan biography of Oldfield and Dill's recounting. One concerns how Oldfield's riding mechanic, George Hill, badly injured a hand. Nolan wrote it happened after an engine backfire ignited an under-hood fire with "Hill attempt[ing] to free the fire extinguisher from its bracket on the cockpit wall, slashed his right hand in the process." Dill writes the injury occurred as "the mud-coated Stutz sometimes leaped as it bounded over the craggy trail." Hill grabbed at something to hold onto in order not to be thrown out of the car, and in so doing sliced his hand.

The greatest service Dill's version contributes is the day-by-day, practically mile-by-mile, description of those 1914 days, noting the



challenges Ma Nature presented to the racers, as well as the challenges of competing against one another that is ever and always a factor in any race.

Dill's book-cover art drew my attention, too. Its creator, Alex Wakefield, had been artistically oriented since childhood. Art school polished his skills and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway hired him as a graphic designer. When he left the Speedway's employ, he concentrated on developing his own fine art following. His talents are apparent on this book's cover.

You can accompany Barney Oldfield and George Hill on their fast transit of the 671 miles of unforgiving terrain of the California and Arizona deserts on the 1914 Los Angeles to Phoenix Desert Classic Road Race in this fast-paced and fresh look at Barney Oldfield.

—Helen V Hutchings