

One of the World's Greatest Auto-Racing Drivers

My oldest and greatest rival gave me the most stirring moment of my



life, for he came as near murdering himself as any racing driver ever did, to escape without a scratch. I refer to Barney Oldfield, the first of the great American riders and one of the public's strongest favorites. Of course, I

Ralph DePalma, have had many wonderful thrills in my life of racing—from accidents which crippled me to losing more than \$150,000 in purses through being jinxed at times when it seemed events had been won. For instance, many might think the greatest thrill of my life was when I had only one lap to go for the \$50,000 prize at Indianapolis in 1916 and yet lost the race because of a frozen motor.

But nothing like the Oldfield affair ever happened and I am quite sure that he thrilled me to the utmost. Incidentally his act lost a race for me and gave him a lead in a series of five matches which we drove.

It happened at Providence, R. I., in 1917 when I was driving one of the fastest cars in the world at that time, and Barney was handling his egg-shaped Golden Submarine, built to protect him in case of accident by being completely inclosed.

We were matched at Providence for three events at five, fifteen and twenty-five miles. The track was partly concrete but not banked enough to stand anything like our maximum speed.

chances we were taking in driving.

In the last heat I went out determined not to let Barney get me and established a slight lead early. By experiment I saw I could outrun him on the stretches, so did not try to get far from him early. Then when I tried to get in front for a safe margin I found the track would not permit me to use enough of my speed and Oldfield always caught me on the turns, though I got a little lead in the straightaways. We rocked along in record time to the very last lap when, on the back stretch, I let out and established what I thought to be a safe lead. I held this around the turn and started down the home straightaway seemingly a sure winner.

I always drive a trifle wide on a dirt track, but this was so well banked that I pulled down on the inside, leaving just barely room for a car to get by me on the rail, providing it was hugging that rail. I glanced back to see Barney on the outer part of the track and then thought sure I was winner.

So imagine my surprise, all of a sudden, to see Oldfield swoop down from the inside, cross the track like a bolt of lightning and shoot by me on the rail to get a lead of five yards. Instantly, I shot the juice to my car, but Barney beat me by the width of a tire in a spectacular finish.

I have never seen such a crazy, fool-hardy stunt in my life, for Barney had to come down that banked track at world-record speed and then straighten up his car to shoot by me.

It was a stunt requiring super-human strength, eyesight and skill—a stunt I would no more think of trying than of committing suicide, for a