

car. Creator of all that Speedway meant to me and to the hundred thousand others screaming around me, he led the cars onto the track and set them to their roaring pace. Again my heart stopped as he shot ahead of the others a hair's-breadth before the starting line, and dashed into the pits—safe—as the green flag flashed for the start!

From the first second we knew this was indeed the race of races! Thirty-three high-powered cars were tearing around that track. The greatest racers of all time were in those cars. This was more than a contest; it was a ride for supremacy between countries and continents. The Old World sped in competition with the New.

The spectacular French driver René Thomas took the lead at the start, but had to turn into the pits for repairs. His little Ballot did not get within sight of the money again.

The heavy American betting was on Ralph de Palma. He had been a previous winner and track idol before the war. His powerful little Packard seemed a certain winner, breezing into the lead at the start and staying there. At the first two hundred miles he was still rocketing around the oval at ninety-two miles an hour.

"He'll break the record!" spectators began saying confidently. The two Peugeots brought from France and reconditioned on Speedway were sizzling along in the capable hands of Howard "Howdy" Wilcox and Jules Goux. The betting was twenty to one against Howdy. He had lost so many races. But he was a good loser and a fine, consistent driver. He was not a spectacular racer like De Palma or Louis Chevrolet, but he managed to get out in front and was in sight of the prize money at the very start. He was averaging 87.12 miles an hour, hugging in the wake of De Palma's car.

The "track hoodoo," as racers call it, rode with De Palma that day. Valve trouble drove him off the track and into the pits and he returned to the oval in the wake of Wilcox and others to whom he had lost mileage. He stepped on the gas and watched for the dangerous breaks that no one could use better than De Palma. He was streaking up to the front when the Packard

plowed down again. Something was wrong with the front wheel. De Palma went into the pits again for repairs and returned to put up a good fight; but he knew, and we all knew, the race was hopelessly lost for him.

Steady-driving Howdy Wilcox had taken the lead in the Peugeot. The crowd was on its feet yelling for Howdy because of his gameness and his many losses and because he represented America. The crowd was kept on its feet all that day, and not alone by Howdy. I can describe the excitement best in words taken from the Indianapolis *Star* of the following day:

"It was a day of thrills and sensations. The tragedies awed and excited the throngs in the stands which were eager for the slightest bits of news and on nervous edge throughout the afternoon. Fortunately the accidents occurred on the back stretch and out of the vision of a majority of the spectators. However, there was staged upon the main stretch now and then accidents to the cars which threatened grave disaster to the drivers but which were righted just in time. Louis Chevrolet gave the grandstands the greatest thrill when he skidded down the main stretch with his right front wheel gone, tearing up the wire to the timing device. There were, it seemed, more than the usual number of chances for fatal spills that were averted by the skill and daring of the drivers which was conclusive that in many respects there never was a better driven race in this or any foreign country."

After two-thirds of the race was over we knew Howdy was winning. And he did win! He set no records that day, but he returned the checkered flag to America. Nor had America figured badly in the other places. Eddie Hearne finished second in a Durant Special; and Jules Goux in a Peugeot, Albert Guyot in a Ballot and Tom Alley in a Bender special followed, with Ralph de Palma seventh in a Packard. The spectacular René Thomas finished tenth in a Ballot.

The underlying glory of the day was Speedway's. To conclude, in the words of the *Star*:

"From a strictly Hoosier standpoint it was one of the greatest of all races, because it was won by Howdy Wilcox of Indian-