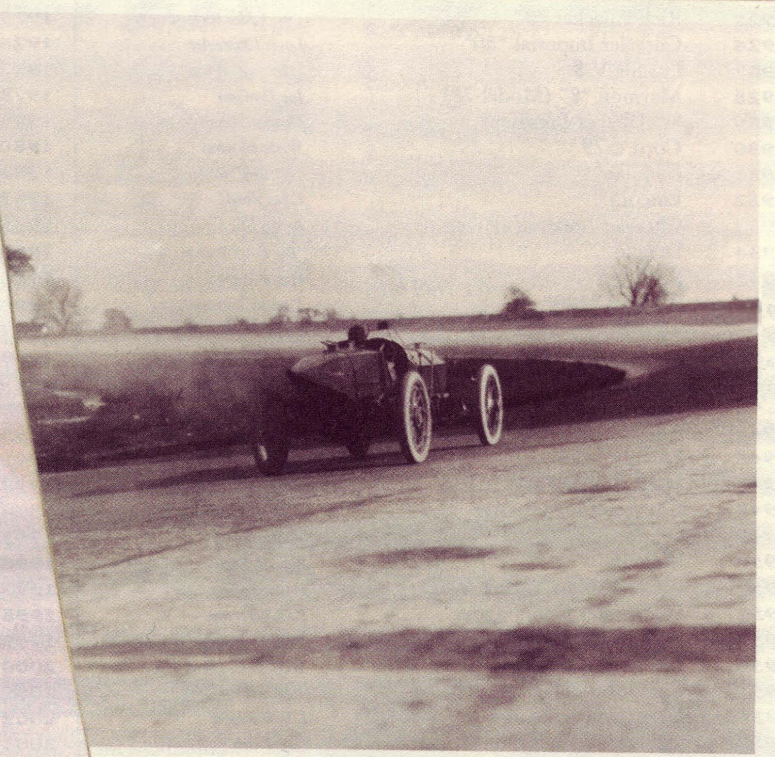


"500 miles is too long
a race for one man
to think of driving."

- Ray Harroun after winning the first
Indianapolis 500 in 1911.



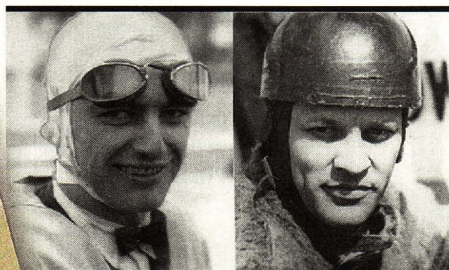
HISTORY WILL
LONG REMEMBER
RAY HARROUN
AS THE WINNER
OF THE FIRST
INDIANAPOLIS 500.
PERHAPS A MISSING
FOOTNOTE TO THE
FILE WOULD BE THE
MAN WHO SHARED THE
SEAT WITH HARROUN,
CYRUS PATSCHKE.



unsung HEROES

STORY BY : MARK DILL | PHOTOS BY : IMS PHOTO

AS EVIDENT BY THE WORDS OF RAY HARROUN AFTER WINNING THE FIRST 500-MILE RACE, RELIEF DRIVERS HAVE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE HISTORY OF THE EVENT. THOUGH MOST OFTEN ASSISTING IN EFFORTS THAT FELL SHORT OF ULTIMATE VICTORY, A SELECT FEW “UNSUNG HEROES” HAVE HELPED BEHIND THE WHEEL OF THE WINNING CAR.



DESPITE BOTH HAVING AN INDY 500 VICTORY TO THEIR CREDIT, NEITHER L.L. CORUM (LEFT) NOR FLOYD DAVIS EVER LED A LAP AT THE SPEEDWAY.

Starting drivers took on a relief driver more than 300 times in the Indianapolis 500, but only six were part of winning efforts. Two of these cases produced the anomaly of two heads for a single year on the Borg-Warner Trophy. These were the winning co-drivers Joe Boyer and Lora Lewis Corum (1924) and Mauri Rose and Floyd Davis (1941).

Because in both cases one driver started the race and another finished, Rose and Boyer were more than relief drivers – they were co-winners. Despite a combined total of seven Indy 500 starts, neither Corum nor Davis ever led a lap at the Speedway. Regardless, those silver bas-relief heads sing their praises with an indelible mark on Speedway history.

There is no such marker for the names of Patschke, Herr and Batten, drivers very much a part of other Indy 500 victories. While 1919 winner Howdy Wilcox is more familiar, few know the role he played in the 1923 “500.” These accomplishments have faded into obscurity.

In 1911, Howard Marmon, the top engineer at Nordyke and Marmon, scouted Cyrus Patschke to drive relief for his two drivers, Ray Harroun and Joe Dawson. At 19, Patschke finished second to George Robertson in Philadelphia's 1908 Fairmont Cup and later showed impressively in 24-hour endurance contests.

He was a master of such events at the 1-mile dirt track of Brighton Beach, N.J. Teaming with Ralph Mulford in October 1909, he set a 24-hour distance record of 1,196 miles in a Lozier. Patschke returned in August 1910 with a Stearns to win at Brighton again with a record 1,253 miles.

With that résumé, Patschke listened as Harroun gave him direction before he relieved 32-year-old veteran Harroun on Lap 64 of the first Indianapolis 500. For 35 laps, the 22-year-old Patschke pursued the more accomplished but equally youthful David Bruce-Brown, who set a blistering pace. Brown's speed proved his undoing as his Fiat's tire wear handed Marmon victory with Harroun at the wheel. Patschke also spotted Dawson in the second Marmon but never raced at Indy after 1911.

Patschke continued to race cars and motorcycles elsewhere for a number of years. He ran an auto parts store and a dealership in Lebanon, Pa., where he was born in 1889 and passed away in 1951.

Don Herr became the second of only four "unsung" winning relief drivers in the next Indianapolis 500, in 1912. Herr first raced at the Speedway at age 19 in the May 1910 race meet in a pair of two-lap races, with a best effort of fifth in a field of 14. Driving a National as he did at Indy, Herr enjoyed the biggest triumph of his career in the 200-mile road race Aug. 25, 1911 at Elgin, Ill.

His career apparently on the upswing, the 22-year-old Herr spent the winter preparing a National for the second Indianapolis 500. Instead, he was bumped from that opportunity when Marmon loaned 22-year-old Joe Dawson to National for the race. Herr became pinch-hitter, driving the winning car from Laps 108 to 144. After falling five laps behind, Dawson won when Ralph DePalma's Mercedes died with little more than a lap to go.



THE YOUNG DAVID BRUCE-BROWN LED MUCH OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE 1911 "500," PURSUED HEAVILY BY PATSCHKE IN WHAT WOULD EVENTUALLY BE THE WINNING MARMON WASP.

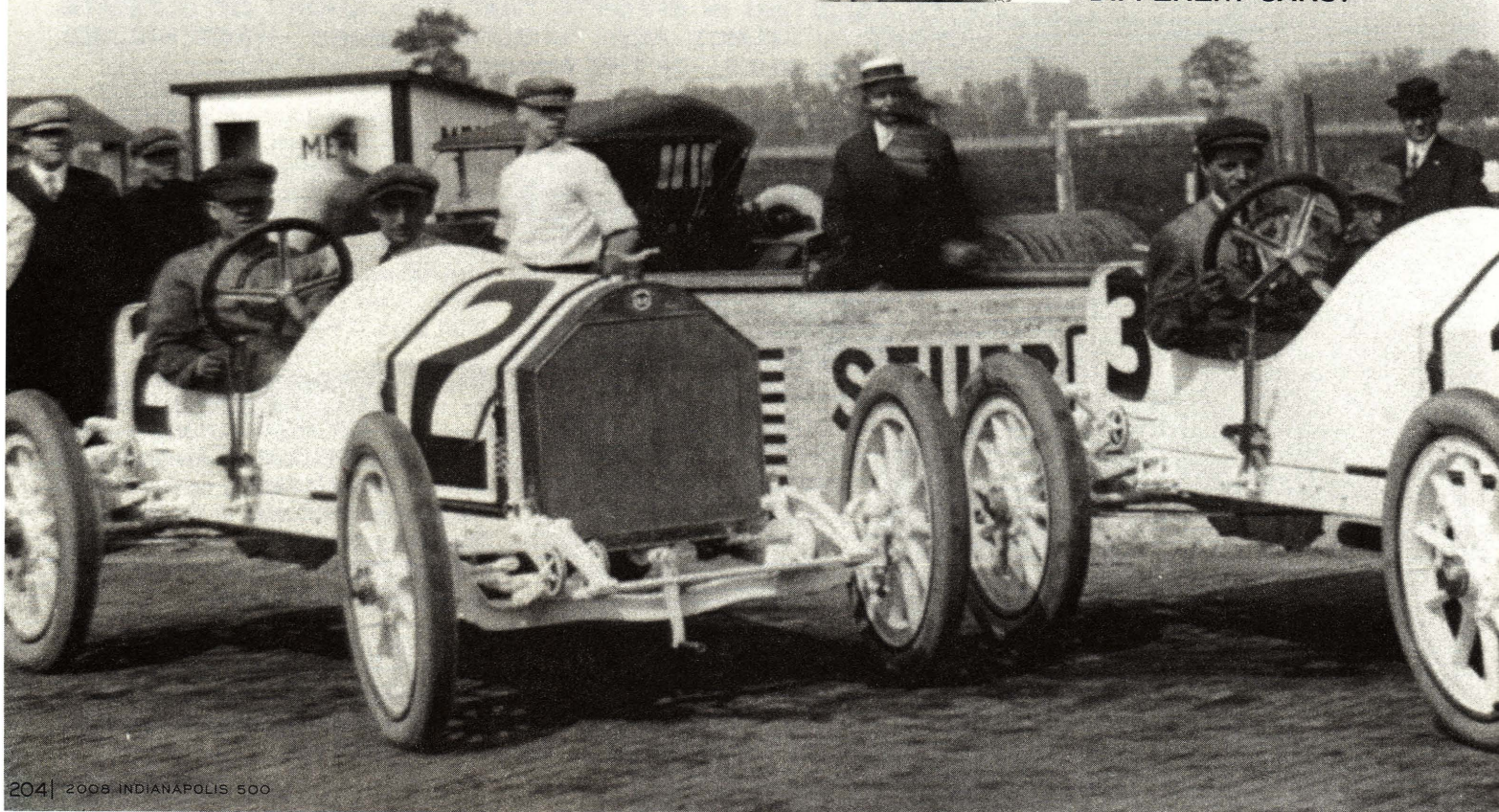
Herr had one more chance at Indy in 1913 with Stutz. After only seven laps, a broken clutch ended his "500" career. He fared better in business, founding a taxi cab company with 1919 Indy winner Wilcox that later became Yellow Cab. He also owned the largest garage in Indianapolis. Born in Salona, Pa., in 1889, Herr passed away July 21, 1953 in Marion, Ind.

Eleven years after Herr assisted Dawson, Wilcox helped Tommy Milton become the first multiple Indy 500 winner. Having triumphed without relief in 1919, this was a kind of second victory for Wilcox, as well.

For 1923, Wilcox and Milton were teammates in "HCS Specials," Miller racers owned by Harry C. Stutz, who had founded Stutz Motor Company but had left the firm. Despite being the slowest qualifier, Wilcox battled his way to the front to lead nine laps before clutch failure foiled him on Lap 60.



ALREADY A WINNER IN 1919, HOWDY WILCOX'S RELIEF OF TEAMMATE TOMMY MILTON IN 1923 PLACED HIM ON A SHORT LIST OF DRIVERS TO LEAD THE SAME "500" WITH TWO DIFFERENT CARS.



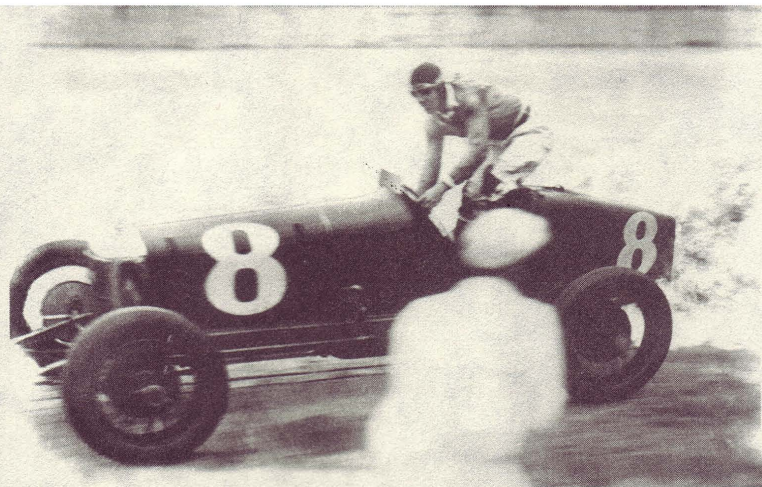
By Lap 103, he was behind the wheel of Milton's car as Tommy's hands had blistered painfully, apparently the consequence of ill-fitting gloves.

Wilcox took the lead with Milton's pole-winning car, passing Harry Hartz at about 300 miles to join Boyer and Rose as the only drivers to lead the same "500" with two different cars. By Lap 151, he was back in the pits to surrender the winning car to a patched-up Milton. The local newspapers praised Howdy, but it was his swan song. After a career that included victories on boards, bricks and dirt, he perished Sept. 4, 1923 when a tire blew on his Duesenberg at the dangerous board track at Altoona, Pa.

The last of Indy's unsung winning relief drivers was Norman Batten, who filled in for winner Peter DePaolo from Laps 105 to 126 of the 1925 race. Batten kept DePaolo's Duesenberg in contention while the diminutive DePaolo tended to blistered hands.

A veteran of three Indy 500s, Batten was best known for winning the Carnegie Medal of Bravery for guiding his flaming Fengler-Miller racer safely past hundreds of spectators at Indy in 1927. Ironically, the 35-year-old Batten lost his life as a result of cowardice by crew members of the English Ocean Liner Vestris on Nov. 12, 1928.

Batten and fellow driver Earl DeVore, along with their wives, were headed to South America to race in the offseason. When the Vestris began to sink, the crew deserted Batten, DeVore and a handful of passengers in a leaky lifeboat.



THOUGH HE HELPED DRIVE DEPAOLO'S DUESENBERG TO VICTORY IN 1925, BATTEN IS PROBABLY BEST REMEMBERED FOR STEERING HIS FLAMING FENGLER-MILLER TO SAFETY IN THE '27 RACE.

As if a metaphor for Indy's relief drivers that labored in anonymity, Batten was swallowed by the cold waters of the Atlantic in the darkness of night along with 127 others. Marion Batten, who survived with help from her husband, lived to tell of his final hours. ■



A YEAR AFTER HELPING JOE DAWSON TO VICTORY, DON HERR (LEFT) WAS PART OF THE THREE-CAR STUTZ TEAM (BELOW) THAT CAME TO THE SPEEDWAY IN 1913. THAT WOULD BE HIS LAST DRIVE IN THE "500."

