

NEWS AND GOSSIP OF AUTOS

BEST DRIVERS MUST BE MINUS NERVES

Society Forced to Abandon Auto
Racing on Account of Its
Awful Dangers.

PILOTS SHOW SKILL ON TURNS

Must Be Absolutely Without Sense
of Fear to Take Life in Hand
Wantonly.

Reckless his calling beyond any form of sport yet devised, the driver of the racing automobile must be a man without nerves.

Those men who held the wheels of the cars in the recent contest for the Vanderbilt cup, and the drivers who are now training for the Grand Prix contest in Savannah in the last week of this month, must have above all other qualifications the mental serenity to withstand five hours of never-ceasing and terrific danger without whimpering.

During that period of time they must be able to whirl around corners, often so sharp as to be nearly right angles. Many of these turns will see the flying, swaying car going around on two wheels. The least lapse of courage on the part of the driver will mean a somersault of the car that means taking of not less than two lives under horrible conditions of maceration, and perhaps of a half dozen spectators.

Not only is the driver at the mercy of his nerve. He also is the puppet of his mechanism. Let the steering gear

times it is necessary to shut off the power or apply the brakes the greater the speed.

It is an admitted fact that the succession of victories for foreign cars in the Vanderbilt Cup race at a time when the event drew the entries of the best machines and drivers in Europe, resulted as much from the skill of the drivers as from the power of the cars themselves.

Automobile racing along open roadways was a new game to Americans. They had not yet learned the art of going along at top speed, and flying around a right angle corner at highest speed, where if the car had skidded, Old Father Death would have jumped into the game and grabbed off a gist of victims.

Lancia, Hemery, Wagner, had been trained to this kind of exploit on the other side. It was no novelty to them. Before every race they committed a sort of moral suicide. The chances were no better than even that they would come out alive. But if they managed to survive and to land a winner, the rewards were big enough to make the risk worthwhile. Therefore they went into the contests with supreme indifference to peril, and ran the race without regard to the safety of themselves, their cars or the thousands who crowded up to the edge of the course.

This kind of driving brought victories. This kind of driving also handicapped the Americans. They were not fatalists. They were good sportsmen with nerve enough for any reasonable combat, but they did not go into the races with the cheerful thought that they were willing to die rather than lose, or that the lives of spectators on the way meant nothing.

But stern though it seems that code is the only way to win auto races, and American drivers are now progressing to the point that they too will soon be without nerves and will be able to down the foreign drivers at the game.

Game Develops Daring Men.

The fascination of the game develops these speed maniacs. Barney Oldfield, Lancia, Kiser, Webb Jay, Keeler, and a host of other drivers who have been killed or injured in the last few years had abundant warning of their fate, but they could not give up the game. Barney Oldfield, shocked at the various accidents in which he has figured, has withdrawn from competition in racing half a dozen times, but the appeal of the contest is ever too strong for him, and he is soon back again. Oldfield himself expects that he will finally meet his death at the wheel.

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...ives under horrible conditions of maceration, and perhaps of a half dozen spectators.

Not only is the driver at the mercy of his nerve. He also is the puppet of his mechanism. Let the steering gear be all right, and his nerve good, and no other cars so near as to make the turn impassable at top speed, and he may get around all right; but if the knuckle of the steering gear should break or get out of order, it is a certain good-by to earth for Mr. Driver and all who happen to be in the death-bound path of his monster machine.

It used to be thought that racing on circular tracks represented the most dangerous form of automobile speed contest, but there are many drivers who do not hesitate to say that they much prefer to make their flights on tracks where properly arranged barriers keep back the public, than to go on the open roads, no matter how well policed they may be, and there free the enormous power contained in a six-cylinder, 120-horse-power racing automobile.

Accidents Are Numerous.

Nobody will ever be able to compute what percentage of accidents fatal to automobile drivers have been caused in attempts to save spectators from injury.

Frank Croker, son of the Tammany political chieftain, came to his death in this way. He was practicing on the beach at Ormond for one of the big races there, and was coming along at top speed when suddenly right in front of him he saw three pedestrians. They had no right there, for it was well understood that in the early morning the flyers would do their tuning up. But Croker did not hesitate. He turned his machine so sharply from its path that it turned turtle, rolled over, dragging the unfortunate driver beneath and did not stop until it had rolled perhaps 100 feet out into the ocean, and was a burning shapeless mass of absolutely wrecked mechanism. The body of Croker was hardly recognizable when it was dragged out from the wreckage.

In nearly every big road race a time comes when some driver must turn his car into the fence to protect onlookers, and most of them have the nerve to do it, and never hesitate no matter what the consequences to themselves.

This need of protecting onlookers produces in road races a condition of constant suspense that is absent from trials on circular, enclosed tracks, where the public can be limited to a certain space and kept there by the barriers erected for that purpose.

In every big road race it has been the experience of the police that no matter what elaborate precautions are taken to protect the public, there are always some more reckless than others who will get out into the course to see what car is coming next.

Public Loves Destruction.

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When the first speed contests in this country were held, men like Cornelius Vanderbilt, E. R. Thomas, Foxhall Keene, Payne Whitney, etc., took part, and had exciting contests with each other.

But now they have all pulled out of the sport, and perhaps the only one left is Louis J. Bergdoll, the young Philadelphia millionaire, who established several new records at Ormond Beach in the speed contests of last spring. But as Mr. Bergdoll is in the automobile business there is perhaps a reason for which he should continue to drive a racing car.

But society has found that automobile racing is too dangerous a game for even its jaded nerves, and the former votaries are well content to leave it to the professional drivers.

HUGE KENOSHA COMPANY MAKES ANNOUNCEMENT

Largest Automobile Factory in the World
Will Make No Radical Changes in
Price or Design.

An announcement of interest to automobile dealers and owners throughout the country has just been made, by Thomas B. Jeffery & Co., makers of the Rambler Automobile, regarding the models to be produced in the largest automobile factory in the world during the season of 1909.

The most significant fact in connection with the announcement is that the price of the 1909 Rambler will remain the same in spite of the fact that this car has during the last season demonstrated itself to be the equal if not the superior of cars selling at much higher prices.

The Rambler line will include five models, a five passenger touring car and three passenger roadster of 34 horse power, a seven passenger, 45-horse-power, four-cylinder touring car and roadster, the famous two-cylinder Rambler utility car and a light two-cylinder runabout.

Exclusive Rambler features, such as the offset crank shaft and the straight line drive in the four-cylinder models and the inclosed unit power plant and transmission, tilting body, detachable tonneau, big wheels and clearance of the two-cylinder models will be continued. Prices will range from \$1,150 to \$2,500, the latter being the price of the high-power, seven passenger model with 123-inch wheel base.

No radical changes have proved necessary or advisable in either design or appearance. Such changes as have been made in the Rambler are merely matters of refinement, comfort or convenience.

The season just passed has been the most successful in the history of Thomas B. Jeffery & Co., the claim being made that out of 2,500 men who have purchased 1908 Ramblers during the last year not one has a complaint or has placed an order for a defective part.

The Rambler announcement in detail appears in the latest number of the Rambler

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Public Loves Destruction.

The public loves destruction. It may not admit it, but the statement is nevertheless true. It will be found at any big road race that it is not the long level speeding stretch leading to the grand stand and the finish line that wins the crowd. Instead the great point of assembly is the dangerous turn, where it is almost an even gamble that before the day is over not less than one life will have been taken.

The hairpin turn on the old Vanderbilt Cup course was always the favorite rallying point of thousands, and here always assembled the biggest crowds that saw the big contest, adding to the dangers of a point already frightfully perilous.

The cry of "Car Coming!" is not always enough to drive back the crowd. Instead it has often taken the actual physical force of the police to get them back out of the paths of monster cars whirling along at a rate in excess of a mile a minute.

In the race of 1906 one spectator rushed out in the road to look after a disappearing car, forgetting apparently that there were other machines in the race. In an instant the flying car of Elliott Sheppard had hit the unfortunate man and lifted him fifty feet in the air. The car Sheppard was driving had such a burst of speed that the impact never slowed up, and Sheppard wasn't sure what he had hit until the end of the race, they told him he had killed a man.

The great test of a motor driver's skill is to take his car around the turns without shutting off his power. The fewer

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VICTORY OF AN AMERICAN PLEASES DONOR OF CUP

Vanderbilt Rejoices Because This Country Produced Winner in Big Auto Class, Which He Supports.

NEW YORK, Nov. 7.—In the triumph of an American car in the Vanderbilt Cup race the object of William K. Vanderbilt Jr. when he gave the cup was accomplished. Probably Mr. Vanderbilt had not expected an American machine to achieve within four years the defeat of some of the best racing machines of Europe, and the victory of Robertson was therefore all the more gratifying to him, as it is to all who have the welfare of the industry here at heart.

Robertson's victory was squarely won, and cars truly representative of France and Germany were defeated by the American racer. The time of the race, the best ever made in such a contest in this country, compares favorably, in view of weather conditions, with the speed attained abroad, and the race was marred by only one thing. Even the fences of the new Motor Parkway, which was completely vindicated as the scene of a race, did not suffice to keep the crowds off the course, and it was little less than a miracle that no one was killed. In the race itself a new record was established in another respect than that of speed, for not a single contestant or spectator was hurt until the contest was over.

The race was a truly international one, and on Thanksgiving day the best cars of America will again face Europe's speediest machines.

STRANG TO GO AFTER RECORD.

Will Attempt to Lower Mark for Twenty-Four-Hour Event.

NEW YORK, Nov. 7.—Lewis Strang reaches Savannah for practice spins over the course there in preparation for the Grand Prize race on Thanksgiving day, when he will make an attempt to lower the record which George Robertson made in the Simplex at the second twenty-four-hour race at Brighton Beach, during the last season.

AUTOMOBILES

DIRECTORY

Motor Cars AND ACCESSORIES

Accessories Hearsay-Willis Co., 118-117 W. Market.

Accessories Gibson Auto. Co., 238 Massachusetts avenue.

Auburn Finch & Freeman, 33 South Capitol avenue.

Bulck Bulck-Losey Co., 130-132 East New York st.

Cadillac Cadillac Automobile Co., 23

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