

The look that Rippingille gave me can best be translated by a mist of interrogation marks. Nor do I blame him for his incredulity. For Jimmy Murphy was then only one of those many mechanics who know only the grease and none of the glory of the speedway. He had driven a little in practice, it is true, but his name was the humble rôle of the exercise boy, and only the winning jockey gets the brackets.

But I had been watching Murphy since the opening of the season, and he had impressed me greatly from the very start. He was, above all else, a paragon of punctuality, and this is an excellent trait in any man, no matter what his profession or trade may be. Moreover, I knew that he was supremely happy when he was tinkering around a racing rig, tearing it down or reassembling, and I could almost sense a song of joy singing in his heart as he toiled, from early morning till late at night, on Milton's car. In other words, he was in love with his job, and when you find a man who is infatuated by his work, you can safely predict that he will go far.

It was on these two admirable qualities alone that I based my early estimate of Jimmy Murphy, and, while I must confess that they seem to form a most inadequate yardstick by which to measure the capabilities of a racing driver, I personally regarded them as master gauges of unfailing accuracy. I demanded no proof of his skill at the wheel, no test of his courage in the withering heat of competition. I merely assumed that he possessed them, and let it go at that.

Perhaps, in Murphy's case, I was temporarily blessed with a sixth sense, a premonition of achievement. At all events, my rash prediction was not slow of fulfillment. A year later, Jimmy got his first driving

assignment in connection with the autumn-time trials held at the Sheepshead Bay tracks, and he came through like a veteran, shattering a world's record on almost every lap he turned during his three-hour tenure of the boards.

In his debut behind the steering wheel, he was the nominee of Chance. Eddie O'Donnell, who was scheduled to drive the car in the trials, had overestimated the strength of his right arm, broken the year previous, and had motored overland from California to New York instead of traveling by train. The fractured bones, but partially knit, rebelled at the strain to which he put them in driving a touring car over desert trails, rough mountain roads and the rutty dirt highways of the Middle West, and, at the proverbial last minute, when a substitution was imperative, the mechanic who had been riding beside Tommy Milton for a year or more got the call. It was the golden opportunity that Murphy had been waiting for, and working for, and he humbled mile after mile with all the cunning of a master.

After such a triumphant baptism, Jimmy Murphy was not to be denied, and my reputation as a prophet was saved. In the opening race of the following season, a two-hundred-and-fifty-mile event held on the Los Angeles Speedway, the checkered flag of victory flected the hood of his Duesenberg, and every 1920 start thereafter yielded him a purse, including another first at Fresno, two seconds at Uniontown, a fourth at Indianapolis, a sixth at Tacoma, and a third at Elgin, the latter a remarkable two-hundred-and-fifty-mile non-stop drive over the roaring roads. Then, to complete a phenomenal season of accomplishment, he went to Florida and hung up two new world's records in time-