The Indianapolis Star, Sunday, May 28, 1911, p. 9 Auto Section (#1)

LIVES OF DRIVERS IN SPEEDWAY RACE TELL OF MANY CONTESTS

Chronicle Big Events of Motordom in America and Several Foreign Competitions—Herb Lytle, Dean of Pilots, Longest Experience in Game.

The following is a history of the careers of the drivers who will pilot the cars in the 500-mile race at the Speedway Tuesday. The lives of the drivers are reproduced here by the courtesy of the Mais Motor Truck Company. Will H. Brown, president of the company, has compiled the history of each driver and given it to the motor fans.

DE PALMA.
(Simplex.)

Ralph De Palma made his debut at Briarcliff road race April, 1908, driving with broken tendons in his arms, sustained in an accident while riding with Albert Campbell, as mechanician, in practice. While in fourth place the wheel broke and upset the car.

June, 1908—His first track race, Readville, Boston. Won five-mile race and heats, defeating Barney Oldfield in this, and also won twenty-five-mile race, beating Harry Grant, Stewart Elliott and others. De Palma drove an Allen-Kingston.

July 15, 1908—Entered with Allen-Kingston against Oldfield, in Stearns, at Hamline track, Minneapolis. Oldfield withdrew and let Soules drive as his substitute. De Palma won each event he started in—five, ten and twenty-five-mile races.

September, 1908—Drove Fiat Cyclone, Hamline track, for first time. Broke Christie's then world's record for mile, 52 seconds flat; De Palma's mark, :51 flat. Also defeated Christie in two heats of match race and won five-mile free-for-all.

October, 1908—Broke Brighton Beach track record, lowering Christie's mark from :54 to :52 2-5. Won five-mile match with B. L. M. car.

October, 1908—Broke world's then five-mile mark held by Oldfield by three seconds, reducing it to 4:26; also establishing numerous records for that track.

Oct. 25, 1908—Won two five-mile heats of match with Robertson and Oldfield.

Nov. 26, 1908—Scored three fastest laps at Grand Prize race, Savannah.

During his first year of racing De Palma entered sixteen competition events, winning ten firsts, three seconds, the unplaced races being Briarcliff, Brighton Beach, twenty-four hour and Grand Prize race.

February, 1909—Won all seven events he entered with "Cyclone" at New Orleans, breaking numerous world's marks, with 90-horse-power Fiat. New Orleans Mardi Gras meet.

April, 1910—Los Angeles Motordrome opening. Won numerous events, scoring world's five-mile record, 3:15.62, and world's fifty-mile record, 37:55.53, again beating Oldfield.

May 5, 1910—Atlanta Motordrome. Won numerous events and scored twenty miles.

June 1, 1910—Officially won Wilkesbarre hill climb record with 200-horse-power Fiat—1:36 2-5.

August, 1910—Port Jefferson, L. I. Won hill climb, setting record of :38 flat with 200-horse-power Fiat.

August, 1910—Won and set record for Plainfield, N. J., hill climb, Johnson's drive course.

August, 1910—Indianapolis Speedway. Won time trials with 200-horse-power Fiat, also ten-mile free-for-all.

September 4, 1910—Won five-mile free-for-all. Hamline track. Beaten in time trials by Oldfield in Benz by 10-100 of a second.

September 17, 1910—Wonderful record smashing. Syracuse, N. Y. Lowered Oldfield's mile dirt track record by skirting a lap in :48.93. Other records from one to eleven miles, which still stand.

September 24, 1910—Narbeth, Pa.—Broke his own world's ten-mile dirt track mark, clipping it to 8:31 1-5, winning also five-mile open and ten-mile handicap.

November 12, 1910—De Palma was the lion of the Grand Prize race, leading the latter third of it until next to final lap. Had a lead of two minutes over the flower of American and European cars and drivers, when his Fiat's engine broke in 390th mile of 415-mile race. Most brilliant piece of road driving of his career.

November 25, 1910—Guttenberg, N. J. Ditched with Fiat "Cyclone" when steering knuckle broke, after winning several events.

(During 1910 De Palma started in forty-eight competition events exclusive of time trials, scoring thirty first places, seven seconds and eight thirds—unplaced three times.)

January 14, 1911—With Simplex racer formerly driven by Robertson, which De Palma rebuilt, did brilliant work at Los Angeles Motordrome, winning numerous events against Wilcox in National, Nikrent in Knox, Dearborn in Fiat "90," and others.

MERZ.
(National.)

Crashing through the fence, demolishing his car and but narrowly escaping death himself, did not deter Charles Merz,

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with B. L. M. car.

October, 1908—Broke world's then five-mile mark held by Oldfield by three seconds, reducing it to 4:26; also establishing numerous records for that track.

Oct. 25, 1908—Won two five-mile heats of match with Robertson and Oldfield.

Nov. 26, 1908—Scored three fastest laps beat Grand Prize race, Savannah.

During his first year of racing De Palma entered sixteen competition events, winning ten firsts, three seconds, the unplaced races being Briarcliff, Brighton Beach, twenty-four hour and Grand Price race.

February, 1909—Won all seven events he entered with "Cyclone" at New Orleans, breaking numerous world's marks, including ten-mile, 9:11 2-5. Later lowered by same driver.)

March, 1909—One hundred-and-twenty-mile world's straightaway record. Time, 1:44 3-5.

May 30, 1909—Made record of 1:29 at Wilkesbarre hill climb, Giants' Despair Mountain, although not allowed technically, as he went so fast that only two watches could catch him. Record allowed to Bruce-Brown, 1:31 3-5.

June, 1909—Readville, Mass., broke Oldfield's twenty-five-mile world's record; also Stanley one-mile record for that track in :34.

June 28, 1909—Point Breeze. Broke Oldfield's mile record for that track; also ten and fifty-mile records.

August, 1909—Indianapolis Speedway opening. Scored four second places with Fiat stock car.

September, 1909—Hamline track. Reduced his own world's mile dirt track from 51 to 50 4-5 seconds. Won match race with Kilpatrick in Hotchkiss and ten-mile free-for-all.

Sept. 19, 1909—Grand Rapids, Mich. All world's dirt track records from one to twenty-six miles.

Oct. 1, 1909—Won Riverhead (L. I.) road race in Fiat stock car.

Oct. 9, 1909—Broke thigh at Danbury (Conn.) track meet.

(During 1909 season, out of forty-seven starts, he won thirty-four first places, eight seconds, one third and was unplaced fifty three times.)

February, 1910—Again beat Oldfield of time trials, scoring thirty first places, seven seconds and eight thirds—unplaced three times.)

January 14, 1911—With Simplex racer formerly driven by Robertson, which De Palma rebuilt, did brilliant work at Los Angeles Motordrome, winning numerous events against Wilcox in National, Nikrent in Knox, Dearborn in Fiat "90," and others.

MERZ.

(National.)

Crashing through the fence, demolishing his car and but narrowly escaping death himself, did not deter Charles Merz, the plucky little National racing pilot, from staying in the racing game. For such was his first experience while at the wheel of a racing car in the race meet held in Indianapolis Nov. 4, 1905. Merz, then a boy in short trousers, was handling his car in fine shape, but a defective tire lost him the control. The car swerved and, crashing through the fence, barely missed several spectators by a hair's breadth and smashed the entire front of the car. Two weeks later, however, Merz was back in the racing game, not influenced by the mishap that nearly cost him his life.

At the helm of a National "forty" stripped stock car, 17-year-old Merz alternated with Jap Clemens after his car had been put out of commission by a simflar accident in the twenty-four-hour races held Nov. 16 and 17, 1905. All through the long night the big car was hurled around the track, illuminated here and there by the flare of gas lamps at the posts. Early winter frosts froze the mists of the drivers' faces and blinded their eyes, stiffening their joints until they had to be lifted from the car when their trick at the wheel was finished. But Merz never flinched. At the end of every fifty miles he climbed into the car bravely to make his half century run, only to be lifted out almost unconscious at the end. While the average rate per hour for the entire twenty-four was only 45 7-12 miles per hour, very slow indeed in this time when the appetite for speed is only satisfied by

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MERZ.
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a ninety-mile-an-hour slip, this time was regarded as phenomenal then, lowering, as it did the record for 1,000 miles by 1:25:-19 1-5, breaking all the records then existing from 500 miles to twenty-four hours.

Since this time Merz has been a familiar name in the racing game. While still young, being only 22 years old, Merz really has the right to claim that he is the veteran National race driver, as he was in the game long before Aitken and Wilcox entered. Merz was born in Indianapolis, is of average height and weighs 150 pounds. Following are some of the victories of Merz:

Jamaica Time Trials, Jamaica, L. I., April 27, 1909—National "sixty," time :48 2-5, one mile, National "sixty," time 1:42, two-mile.

Wilkesbarre Hill Climb, Wilkesbarre, Pa., May 31, 1909—National "sixty" first, time 1:48, six-cylinder.

Fort Wayne Races, Fort Wayne, Ind., July 31, 1909—National "thirty-five" first, time 5:33, five-mile free-for-all.

Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Indianapolis, August 19-21, 1909—National "forty" first, time 9:16.8, ten-mile.

Indianapolis Motor Speedway Races, Indianapolis, May 27, 1910—National "forty" second, 85:44.15, 100-mile stock, 301-400.

Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Sept. 3, 1910—National "forty" second, 83:12.51, 100 miles, 301-450, Remy Bressard Trophy, without a stop.

Los Angeles Motordrome, Jan. 14, 1911—National "forty," 7:23 3-5, ten-mile; National "forty," 13:56 4-5, twenty-five-mile.

Oakland Panama-Pacific Road Races, Near San Francisco, Feb. 22, 1911—St. Francis Hotel Trophy, Fourteen laps, 152.922 miles, 10.923 miles to a lap. Time, 137 minutes 20 seconds; average, 66 8-10 M. P. H.

Atlantic-Pablo Beach Races, Near Jacksonville, Fla., March 28-31, 1911—National "forty" 14:58.43, twenty-mile; National "forty," 8:02.67, ten-mile.

BURMAN.
(Benz.)

Robert Burman, acknowledged "Speed King," is 27 years old. Born near Imlay City, Michigan, in 1884, Burman lived on the farm until about 17 years of age. Then he went to testing automobiles and tested the first car ever made by the Buick Motor Company, when the factory was located at Jackson, Mich. Later he entered the employ of the Jackson Automobile Company, and soon became head tester. While he was thus employed a freak racing car was built in Jackson and the builder invited Burman to a five-mile match race on the mile horse track at the fair grounds. Burman took the chance of being shown up, and won the race by almost a mile.

This started the speed career of the present monarch of them all. After much persuasion, and the offer to pay his own expenses if the company would let him have a car, he was allowed to enter a fifty-mile race at Detroit in 1906. All of the big boys of the game were in, but Bob started out to "beat it" and won the race hands down. His next experience was to drive twenty-two and a half hours of a twenty-four-hour race in St.

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