

# RACE REPORTS



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## VANDERBILT CUP RACES

THE VANDERBILT CUP RACE, last run in 1937 and since given up for dead, came to life June 19 in a wild-and-woolly, rhu-barb-ridden Formula Junior 75-miler on Long Island. The venue was a flat but slippery 1.5-mile course, carved out of the Roosevelt Raceway parking lot by hay bales, rubber cones, bushel baskets and many gallons of white paint.

Harry Carter, driving a patent-leather-black Stanguellini, won the 50-lapper at just over 68 mph in a hectic hour of competition that culminated in a bi-lingual squabble that lasted longer than the race itself.

The altercation stemmed from the belief of Pedro Rodriguez, Sr., Mexican industrialist and papa of Pedro, Jr., one of Mexico's whiz-kid driving brothers, that his son had been robbed, but badly, and in broad daylight, by the officials. Harry Heppenstall, owner of Pedro's DKW-powered Scorpion, mechanic Harry Stevens and a platoon of militant followers aided papa Pedro in storming the officials' stand at race end, demanding a recount and redress of other grievances.

The standings first released placed Carter first, Charlie Wallace's Scorpion 2nd, Jerry Truitt's Stanguellini 3rd and Pedro 4th. Pedro's delegation contended that he could not have lost his lead, in spite of a lengthy 41st-lap pit stop, and that Carter was not the winner.

A re-check of the official lap charts was made, but it did not help the cause of Mexican justice at all. It confirmed Carter as the winner, but moved Newton Davis' Stanguellini into 4th place, dropping Pedro back to 5th. This led to further bending of inter-American relations, but the decision was finally upheld by our FIA boss, George Rand.

This Donnybrook would never have taken place if an adequate scoring system, up to Indianapolis or Sebring standards, had been in operation. Thousands of spectators streamed down the Long Island expressways after the race, wondering who really had won. Some, it might be added, still wonder.

While the race was run under SCCA auspices, Westport bent over backward to permit the Vandy renewal to adhere to

the format of earlier races, a formula event open to all comers. While there was no money on tap—at least out in the open—there was prestige enough attached to the event to lure 1960 Indianapolis winner Jim Rathmann and his 1959 counterpart Rodger Ward away from the USAC championship race at Langhorne. Carroll Shelby was on hand and even more of the "names" might have been there had it not been for the press of Le Mans business the next weekend. A half-dozen of the drivers were at Idlewild awaiting trans-Atlantic flights two hours after the contest was over.

The SCCA provided some luminaries of its own. Charlie Kolb, fresh from a dozen-plus Formula Junior victories in his Elva-Sprite, was one of the favorites. Walt Hansgen, Ed Hugus, George Constantine and most of the East Coast Formula Junior specialists insured the organizers of a first-class field.

Ironically, most of the names either failed to go the distance or were encumbered by mechanical troubles that put them out of contention. Rathmann made the most spectacular exit. On the 11th lap, the Isis of Norm Buerdsehl spun off the course, then darted back in Rathmann's path. Jim tried to dodge, but didn't quite make it. His Stanguellini smacked the Isis broadside, then hurtled over the top. Said Rathmann: "I thought I'd had it. I looked down and could see the tops of the heads of the people standing along the fence." Fortunately, his machine landed right side up and Jim suffered no more than a shaking up.

Ward retired just 2 laps later when he was the victim of a melee not of his own making and was shunted into the supports of one of the spectator bridges, then into the hay bales. Rodger said later he thought some of the Formula Junior drivers played a little too fast and loose, which is something coming from an old dirt-track and Indy driver. "These cars don't have much power and it seems to give some of these guys a false sense of security," Ward related. Both he and Rathmann agreed that Formula Junior racing is here to stay and both want another taste of it.

The gearbox on Shelby's Mitter-DKW simply refused to function after a few

laps and he was out. Hansgen's Lotus-Ford retired with mechanical troubles after leading 4 of the early laps. Constantine's Volpini started acting up at the half-way point and the half-dozen pit stops that resulted knocked it from contention after it had been up among the leaders. Kolb was a threat in the early laps but slowed, then finally retired late in the contest.

Indeed, the attrition rate was of full Grand Prix proportions. No less than 19 of the 33 starters landed in the dead-car park before the 50 laps were up, and some of those who managed to circulate to the end were chugging along at less than full revs. Faded brakes and overheated engines seemed to be the most prevalent causes of retirement.

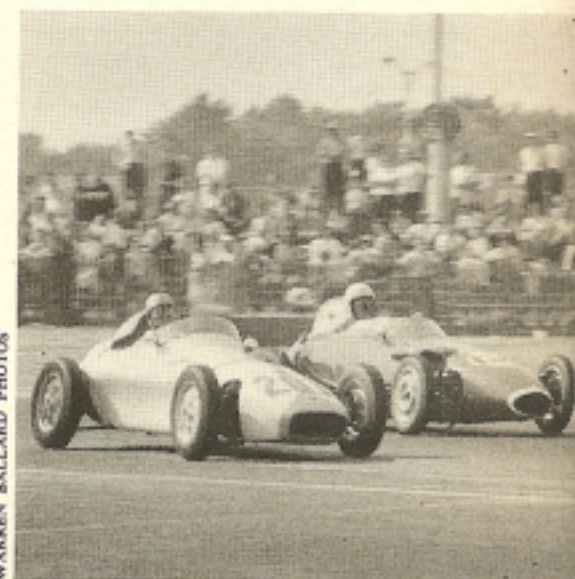
Except for brief moments in a corner here and there, only four different drivers led the event. Ricardo Rodriguez, driving one of the North American Racing Team's Oscas, led the first lap in a wheel-to-wheel dice with Hansgen, but Walt's Lotus promptly swallowed up the Mexican's car going into the right-hander at the end of the pit straight starting lap 2.

Hansgen moved out nicely once he was clear of traffic, but his car started to misbehave on the 4th circuit. He stopped for a check and Ricardo moved back into first place on the 5th lap. He remained in the lead with Jim Hall's Elva, Carter, Kolb and Wallace doing most of the early pressuring. On the 16th lap, though, Ricardo went into the pits with engine trouble, tried one more circuit, then retired his car and brother Pedro grabbed the lead and ran with it.

Phil Forno, off to a slow start in Alfred Momo's BMC special, moved well through the traffic (and 33 Juniors on a 1.5-mile course provides traffic aplenty) until he was in 2nd spot, lapping faster than Rodriguez. But this, alas, was not the Momo stable's day. The BMC broke an oil line, the engine froze up and Forno became a spectator.

Pedro continued to fly and by the 41st lap led Carter by one full circuit. Then his engine started misfiring and he called at the pits for a complete change of plugs. It was this pit stop that caused the later "Summit" debate. When he

Scorpion and Volpini at speed.



WARREN BALLARD PHOTOS



pulled back onto the course, Carter, Wallace, Truitt and Davis were ahead of him on most lap charts. But on the sheet being kept in his pit, he had a 2-lap lead when he stopped and was still a lap ahead after rejoining the fun. Thinking all was secure, he made no effort to improve his position in the closing 9 laps and was a very surprised young man when he found himself 5th, not first.

Starting positions for the 33-car field were determined by two 5-lap qualification races for the 41 entries on the day before. The first heat was won by Hansgen, with Ricardo just a car length back. Carter was 3rd, Lew Flink 4th in a Scorpion and Rathmann 5th. The 2nd heat was Kolb's by 50 yards over Wallace. Hall was 3rd, Davis 4th and Heppenstall 5th.

The starting grid provided an interesting display of the Formula Junior equipment currently available. No less than 16 marques were represented. Among them were nine Stanguellinis and three each of the Elva, Osca and Scorpion brand.

Among the supporting races on the 2-day program was the Rickenbacker Trophy Race, a 20-lapper for big modifieds and unrestricted machines. Hansgen won quite handily aboard Briggs Cunningham's Type 61 Maserati, though Constantine held his Chevy special close for the first 4 laps, the car retiring on the 18th circuit with a broken half-shaft. Stutz Plaisted brought his Formula II Cooper home 2nd and Kolb drove Charlie Kreisler's Cooper Monaco to a comfortable 3rd.

The first race of the show, for G and H production machines, provided three trophies for the Team Roosevelt operation. Paul Richards was first overall and first in G in one of the Fiat-Abarth team cars, though he had problems on every lap with Vince Tamburo's 2nd-place Sunbeam Alpine. Chandler Lawrence won H production, also in a Roosevelt F-A, and Skip Callanan was 2nd in G and 3rd overall in the third FDR Fiat-Abarth.

The 2nd race, for E production cars, was also a squeaker, but John Wright managed to get the snoot of his Porsche over the line 6 feet ahead of Fran Gorman's Austin-Healey. The F production

race, another 15-lapper, was won by Dick Webster in an Elva Courier. Ted Buckley, also Elva-mounted, led for 12 laps but a burned valve forced his entry out. John Heyer, Elva, followed Webster.

The B, C and D production and G and H modified races directly before the Vanderbilt were won by Bob Grossman's familiar Ferrari Berlinetta and Kolb's Mk V Elva.

The first Vanderbilt Cup race, in 1904 and of 284.24 miles, was won by George Heath, an American who became a British citizen, but drove a French Panhard. He averaged 52.2 mph, beating Albert Clement's Clement-Bayard by about 2 min.

The 1905 and 1906 races were held over a slightly altered route in the Westbury area of Long Island. They were won by Victor Hemery and Louis Wagner, both on Darracqs. There was no race in 1907, as the Long Island Motor Parkway, which was to make up part of the course, had not been completed. The series was resumed in 1908 when George Robertson won aboard "Old 16," a 120-hp Locomobile, the first American car to win.

The 1909 and 1910 races were also held on Long Island. Both were won by an Alco driven by Harry Grant. In 1911, the venue was moved to Savannah where Ralph Mulford scored Lozier's only victory in the series. In 1912, the race was run in Milwaukee, then in Santa Monica in 1913. Ralph dePalma won both in a Mercedes, taking the last at a speed of 75.59 mph.

The last two races in the original series were held in San Francisco in 1915 and Santa Monica in 1916. Dario Resta won both for Peugeot. America's entry into World War I in 1917 killed off the Vanderbilt and the cup was permanently retired to its present place of honor in the Smithsonian Institution.

In 1936, George Vanderbilt, a nephew of the founder, put up a 2nd Vanderbilt Cup and had a winding road course built, part of it on the site of the original circuit, which includes most of the grounds of the present-day Roosevelt Raceway. Historians may be interested to note that the pit straight on this year's course is laid over part of the runway used by Charles Lindbergh when he took off on

his historic non-stop flight to Paris in 1927.

Tazio Nuvolari won the 1936 race in an Alfa Romeo at 65.99 mph, hindered by a track surface that broke up as the contest went along. Jean Pierre Wimille was 2nd for Bugatti.

The idea of French and Italian machinery showing its superiority to an American audience did not set well with Herr Hitler. When it was announced that the race would be held in 1937, Mercedes and Auto-Union were entered.

Auto-Union's ace was Bernd Rosemeyer, one of the few pilots ever to master the car's tendency to dump itself in the ditch without warning. Mercedes had Rudi Caracciola and Dick Seaman. Nuvolari was back for Alfa Romeo, but his car was destroyed by fire. Caracciola went out with brake failure, leaving Seaman and Rosemeyer to fight it out.

The issue was not decided until the 89th of 90 laps. Seaman pitted for fuel and Rosemeyer gained a 51-sec advantage. His average for the 294 miles was 82.56 mph while Seaman averaged 82.23. Rex Mays took 3rd in an Alfa. And thus ended competition for the second Vanderbilt Cup.

Where do we go from here? The New York Region is willing to put the race on again next year. The drivers are willing to compete. And trophy donor Cornelius Vanderbilt, another nephew of the founder, said: "I'm confident more and more people will view this race in future years."

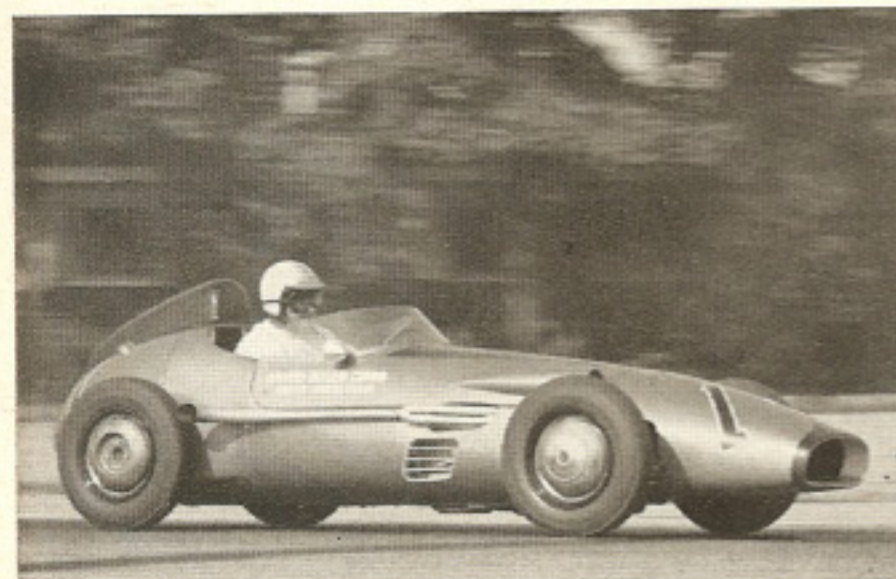
But Al Weil, president of Roosevelt Raceway, indicated that the future of the Vanderbilt may be in doubt for some time. He said: "I think the racing was a success—but the final decision about next year isn't up to me alone." And there the matter rests.

—Bob Morrison

#### ELKHART LAKE JUNE SPRINTS

Showing all the prowess and driving skill that gained him the USAC National Driving Championship in 1959, Augie Pabst returned to the annual SCCA-sponsored International June Sprints at Elkhart Lake, Wis., and wheeled a finely tuned Scarab to a resounding victory in the 140-mile feature event, establishing both the one-lap and race speed marks,

Bandini is the word for Rodger Ward's F-Jr mount.



View from Rex Woodgate's BMW during vintage car race.

