

1911

WELL BEFORE THE FIRST Indianapolis 500, Ray Harroun was one of the most accomplished drivers of his era and by 1910 wanted to retire from racing.

But when Carl Fisher announced his plans for the new 500-mile race, Harroun delayed retirement and entered with his favorite car, the Indianapolis-made Marmon Wasp.

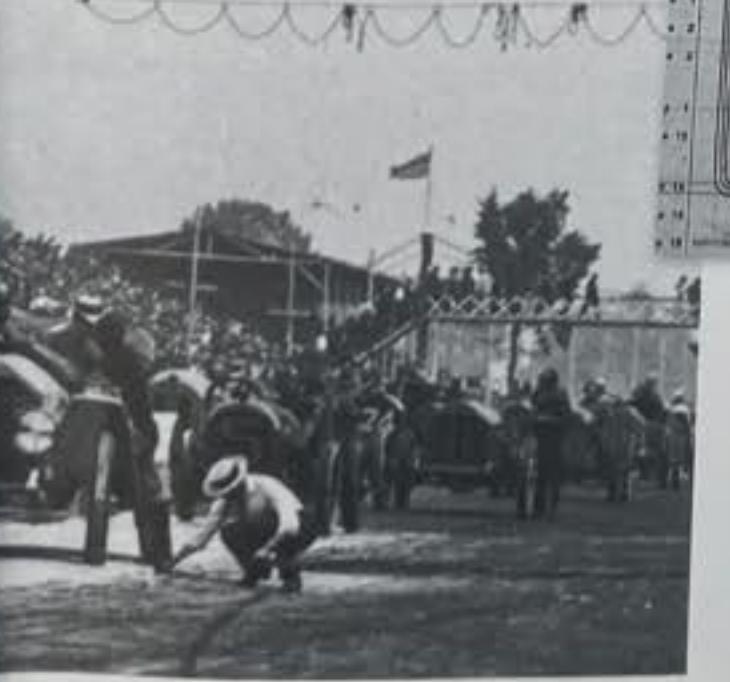
It was a one-seater while all 39 other cars carried a driver and a mechanic (then called a "mechanician") to keep the car running and serve as a second pair of eyes. Harroun's Wasp was equipped with a rear-view mirror and he won with a time of 6 hours, 42 minutes, 8 seconds before a crowd of about 80,000.

One man died in the race, mechanic Sam Dickson.



ABOVE: Bob Burman sits at the wheel of the car he drove in the first 500. He finished 19th in the first race and competed at Indianapolis each year through 1915 but was killed in 1916 in a race in California. StarNews Archives

BELOW: Drivers prepare for the start of the first Indianapolis 500. The front row drivers (left to right) were: Johnny Allen (1), Harry Endicott (3), Ralph DePalma (2), and Lewis Strang (1). In the early years of the race, qualifying times had no bearing on starting positions. The front row spots simply went to whoever signed up first. DePalma, who finished sixth, was the only front row starter to finish in the top 15. The race's winner, Ray Harroun, started 28th in the 40-car field. *Van Aken Collection*



INDIANAPOLIS STAR.

INDIANAPOLIS, WEDNESDAY, MAY 31, 1911.

FALSE PEACE HELD WORSE THAN STRIFE

Veterans Cheer Roosevelt, Who
Recalls Lie Which They De-
fied in 1861.

THINKS WAR JUSTIFIABLE

**Former President Urges Caution
In Entering Into International
Peace Pact.**

EMOTION RUNS GAMUT.

A thrill-thirsty crowd enjoyed almost all known human emotions during the speed test that Harroun won after six hours and about forty-one minutes.

The nervous spectators shivered at times when it looked as if

...it looked as though the motor merriment would be turned into a orgue mourning and they rejoiced, with loud cheering, as some dirt-streaked and gasoline-scented favorite whirled past at dizzying pace.

Most of the people went to the track to be thrilled—and they got their money's worth. The wonder is that they were not tickened with worse accidents than those that did occur. Considering the speed of the cars, the daring of the drivers and the congested and slippery condition of the track—there was constant fear that more fatal accidents would occur any second.

The Speedway management worked hard to protect both drivers and spectators. With an army of soldiers, ambulances at four parts of the grounds and hospital tents pitched here and there, every precaution was taken. And the drivers on the course were keen on edge not to be guilty of causing a rival an injury. It was a clean sportsman's race—no "dirty work." Real men played the game for all they were worth.



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ABOVE: Ray Harroun sits in his Marmon Wasp. He averaged 74.602 mph in completing the first 500 in 6 hours, 42 minutes and 8 seconds. He won \$14,250 from the \$30,150 purse. *The Indianapolis News*.

LEFT: The pace car leads the pack as the first Indianapolis 500 is about to begin. The pit area is in the lower right-hand side, where cloth covers were used to keep the hot Indiana sun off the crew members. *Starfile Archives*.

B BELOW: A rare panoramic view of the track in 1911, the inaugural Indianapolis 500. *Tom Attkins Collection*

