

1915

FOR RALPH DEPALMA, THE 1915 500 must have seemed like a replay of 1912. Once again he was leading in the final laps when his car began to falter. And this time, Dario Resta, Howdy Wilcox and Gil Anderson were close behind.

However, DePalma's luck and his engine held out, and he crossed the finish line to win in the most competitive 500 so far. Most in the crowd seemed to be rooting for him, remembering his 1912 disappointment and how gracious he had been in defeat.

When DePalma wearily climbed out of his car, fans pushed their way past a police barrier to lift up their hero and carry him off on their shoulders.

ABOVE: Ralph DePalma, winner of the 1915 500. *StarNews Archives*

RIGHT: The field for the 500 in 1915 starts four abreast. Howdy Wilcox (far right) started on the pole. Ralph DePalma (second from the right), Dario Resta (3) and Earl Cooper (4) make up the rest of the front row. DePalma won the race with Resta finishing second.

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LOSES AUTO BONNET AND \$1,200--ALMOST

Noel VanRaalte, Sunbeam Driver, Recovers Battered Hood Dropped on Back Stretch and Finishes Tenth.

A battered automobile bonnet—a hood that had been scarred and bent through several miles of grinding speed-torn loose from its fastenings and fallen to the track, meant \$1,200 or nothing to Noel VanRaalte, driver of Sunbeam, No. 7. The hood fell from the car while it was rounding one of the turns, and VanRaalte went into the pits without it, dejected and downhearted because he was told that he would be disqualified if he attempted to continue the race without it. One of the race officials rushed up. "Where's your hood?" he asked. "You can't go on without it," replied the disconsolate driver. "It fell off," and he pointed toward the back stretch. "Well, get it on and go to it," shouted the official.

Hood Replaced Hastily.

Quicker than a flash, VanRaalte was back in the car he was preparing to push from the track. He sped around to where the hood lay. Picking it up, he rushed back to the pits, where it was fastened in place with a wire, and on he went.

With booty to the extent of a small fortune and with new speed laurels on his brow, the wiry little Italian said nothing, smiled only a little and did nothing but stand beside his mount, until the enthusiasm of his admirers broke all bounds and in a mob-like rush they broke through the police lines, lifted the winner to their shoulders and carried him struggling away.

Breaks Through Guarded Gates.

Men, women and children were carried away in the flood of DePalma admirers. The crowd broke through guarded gates and surged onward, evidently trying to carry him to the grand stands to receive the congratulations of the cheering thousands across the track.

Sixty thousand speed enthusiasts were shouting cheers in rapid-fire order. They had seen the same DePalma, "the dough-luck driver," come within a few miles of winning the great 500-mile race on another occasion. They had seen him struggle against impossible odds to bring his car around the last few laps when the prize and the honor seemed well within his grasp. They had seen him forced into giving up the attempt to push his car down the stretch in one of the most dramatic scenes in motor racing history, and when he could not win, the crowd saw he was a good loser.

When on that day DePalma was cheered for being a good loser, many thousands of persons who attend the races regularly expressed the hope that they would see him some day win the Speedway race. The hope was fulfilled. The DePalma jinx had received a blow that had sent him to his corner. Beside defeating the entire field of racers and his customary bad luck, the Italian had set new records which, if prevailing predictions come true, will not be outdone in many years to come.

Grasped by Men in Pits.

As soon as he could get away from the crowd of admirers DePalma was beside his car again to receive the joyful, yet quiet greetings of the men who had worked with him in the pits. To these men defeat and victory are old stories and their reception of the winner was not marked by the hilarious antics that have featured the greetings of the winners in previous years.

