

Ralph DePalma, Gentleman Champion

By Gary D. Doyle, 384 pages, 6-3/4" x 9 3/4", hard bound with embossed, foil stamped cover and color dust jacket. Interior text accompanied by 300+ color paintings, illustrations and period photographs. Available from Golden Age Books, 5013 Bella Collina St., Oceanside CA 92056. Ph: 866-600-6973 (Toll Free) for \$80.00 plus \$8.00 S&H.

Here is a new work by Gary Doyle, author of *King of the Boards*. It's a biography of the great Ralph DePalma. But more than a narrow profile, the book offers vivid descriptions of all the major motoring events of the era that are intertwined with the life story of this legendary driver.

Of the book's 18 chapters, all but one is devoted to De Palma's distinguished racing career. De Palma's activities are described on a year-by-year basis and this is supplemented by detailed reporting of specific major events. These include Grand Prize, Vanderbilt Cup, and other road-racing meets at Briarcliff, 1908; Savannah, 1908, 1910, 1911; Elgin, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1920; Santa Monica, 1912, 1914; Corona, 1913, 1914; Milwaukee; San Francisco; and the French Grand Prix of 1912, 1914 and 1921. De Palma's board-track activities are not ignored either, as coverage is supplied for events at Maywood, Sheepshead Bay, and Beverley Hills, for example. De Palma was a consummate dirt-track driver and his match racing and barnstorming exploits are described too, along with all his many appearances at the Indianapolis 500. A separate chapter is devoted to his 1919 Daytona Beach record runs. Along with all the racing coverage are short profiles of DePalma's more famous contemporaries: drivers such as Barney Oldfield, Eddie Rickenbacker, Teddy Tetzlaff and Dario Resta. There is an interesting archival photography accompanying all the stories.

The book also contains comprehensive appendices. There are profiles of Peter Helck and Peter Hearsey, the artists whose work appears in the book. A 13-page statistical review is provided detailing DePalma's race placing from 1908 through 1933. The 26-page Bibliography is most impressive and there's a useful Index.

The quality of the publication deserves special mention. Not a flashy coffee-table edition, but rather a compact, understated, tasteful work with a subtle quality right to its very core. It's a book whose overall design is pleasing because all the components work together so perfectly. The cover includes a blind-embossed image and foil-stamped titles in matte silver; this wrapped in a glossy dust jacket featuring a color illustration by Peter Hearsey. The interior utilizes fine matte paper for maximum legibility and minimum glare. In an age of computer generated everything, typesetting often suffers. Not so in *DePalma*, the type here is old-fashioned linotype and it is superb. Paintings by noted illustrators Peter Helck and Peter Hearsey complement the text and are beautifully presented. As well, there is extensive use of period photography with subtle color tints added, which tastefully embellish the old black and white images. A gloss varnish topcoat has been applied to all the paintings and photographs that further enhance their reproduction.

Ralph DePalma is a new book worthy of the "*Gentleman Champion*" and one that is engaging and revealing. §