

Ralph De Palma: Gentleman Champion

Gary G. Doyle

Golden Age Books

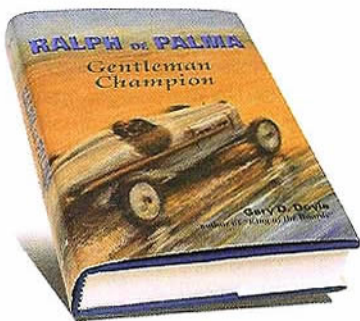
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Too often, you can bumble into the gaffe of believing that automobile racing didn't exist in this country before the past decade or thereabouts. Doubt what we said, do you? Walk into any big chain bookstore and let us know if you can find a title that doesn't involve today's Gen-X NASCAR crowd, Danica Patrick or Michael Schumacher. Was anybody even racing before 2000?

They were, and thanks to Doyle, these ghosts from nearly a century past still live today. The author is best known for his acclaimed biography of the great Jimmy Murphy, his grandmother's cousin. Now, Doyle is back with a lavish, definitive work on the life and times of Ralph De Palma. After emigrating from Foggia, Italy, and landing in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, De Palma morphed into a professional racer; first on bicycles, then aboard motorcycles, and finally behind the massive steering wheels of the earliest competition automobiles. A winner at Indianapolis in 1915, De Palma is sadly better known for pushing his massive, broken Mercedes to the Brickyard finish line in 1912.



This book, running to 374 hardcover pages, is a wealth of anecdotes, photography and artwork, including paintings by both Peter Helck and Peter Hearsey. The greats from racing's dawn including Teddy Tetzlaff, Ralph Mulford and David Bruce-Brown segue through its text. An achingly detailed bibliography encompasses a full 25 pages. Virtually alone, Doyle has moved the sport's earliest history into the three-dimensional present for all of us. His book is utterly vital, an essential volume for anyone's racing or historical library.