

This year marks a vast improvement in the straightaway speed trials; and Daytona looks forward to 1955 and a new speedway.

By **DON O'REILLY**
EDITOR, CAR LIFE

DAYTONA



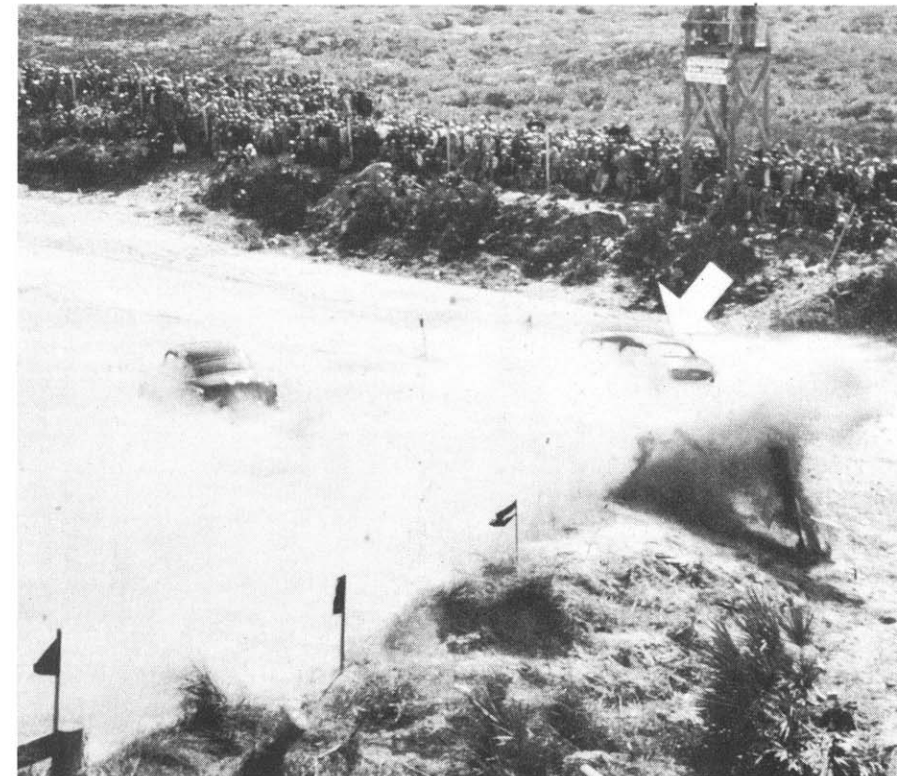
Fonty Flock takes the lead on the first lap at Daytona in 1953.

Don O'Reilly Photo



Don O'Reilly Photo

Bob Pronger, in second position, goes over the bank.



Don O'Reilly Photo

Pronger's Olds rolls back on its wheels.

THE end of an era and expected start of another is the theme at Daytona Beach this year as NASCAR (National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing), the city officials and Bill France combine to observe the golden anniversary of auto racing on the self-styled World's Most Famous Beach.

The end of an era:

This may be the last time the famous 4.1-mile beach and road course echos to the deep-throated roar of the stock cars in their race for fame and cash.

The birth of another era:

If present plans materialize, 1955 will see the stock cars roaring around the circumference of a brand new 2-million dollar 2½-mile asphalt speedway in Daytona Beach.

The golden anniversary:

In 1953, Bill France helped celebrate the golden anniversary of speed at Daytona, in commemoration of 1903 when John Anderson, manager of the Hotel Ormond, encouraged his wealthy guests to compete in speed runs on the smooth, hard-packed beach sand. Early contestants were Ranson E. Olds, Alexander Winton, William K. Vanderbilt, Jr., W. Gould Brokaw and Walter Christie. The following year, 1904, Commodore Charles Burgoyne was chiefly responsible for the establishment of racing on a permanent basis and was named president of the Florida East Coast Racing Association. His donation of trophies for the winners in those early years provided the incentive for the expansion of the contests which became international in scope, thus this year marks the 50th anniversary of racing.

Tom McCahill, automotive writer and auto test driver, took over the reins as general chairman of the straightaway speed trials, this year, after several years as a contestant. The genial balding 'Uncle Tom' entered into his new-found job with fervor and enthusiasm to put into practice several ideas gleaned from his own experiences while a trophy-seeker.

McCahill foresaw great things for the national speed trials for American stock cars and standard production sport cars. With future races to be run at the proposed new speedway, the beach would still serve as the site for the Speed Week straightaway runs.

"Daytona is the only place," opined Uncle Tom, "where any motorist can run his own automobile for possible speed records and do it with safety and under proper supervision."

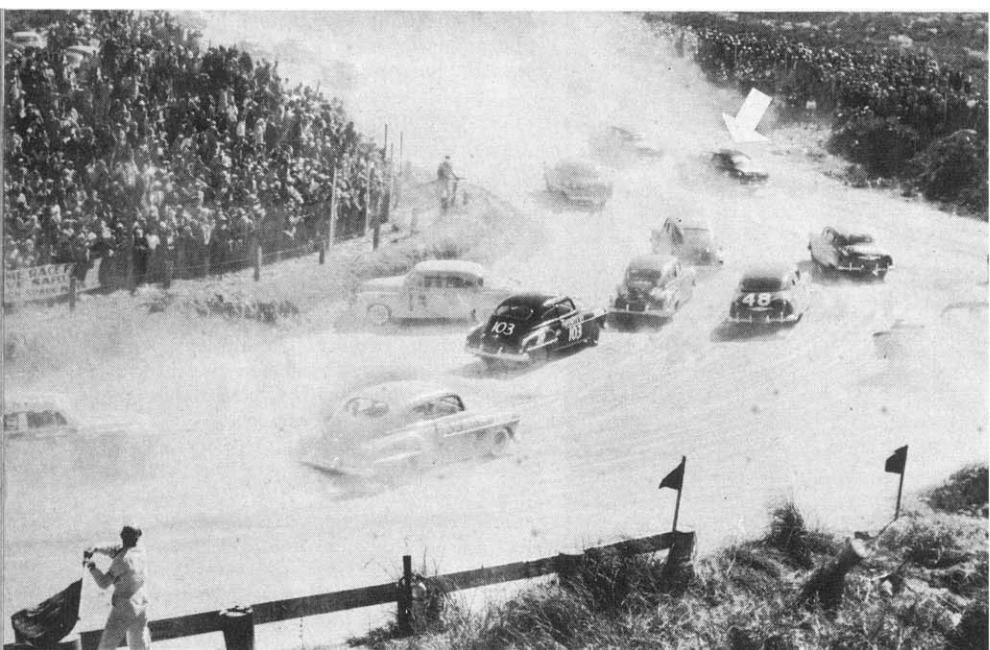
MORE

SPEED WEEK



Don O'Reilly Photo

Pronger is out of sight on far right, as race goes on.



Don O'Reilly Photo

Pronger (arrow) gets squared away and resumes competition . . .

McCahil inaugurated a new policy for running certified stock cars, using a price class formula rather than the previous classifications according to displacement.

"It makes little sense," the chairman said, "for a little guy in a \$2,500 sport car to have to run against some wealthy bird in a super \$10,000 job, just because it happens to have the same engine displacement."

"The public wants to find out which is the better car in the \$2,000 bracket, and so on up to Mr. Gotrock's gold plated wagon, but running on an equal basis."

Assisting the Glen Gardner, N. J. writer, was Paul Whiteman, the King of Jazz and sport car enthusiast of many years standing. The famed band leader took on the job of director of sport car activity and had as his guests the radio and TV disk jockeys from coast to coast.

Among the interested spectators was Donald Healy, of England, auto designer and builder.

The schedule called for Sunday February 14, opening day, test runs for American and foreign cars over the mile speed course; Monday, speed trials, American, foreign and midget race cars; Tuesday, speed trials, late model stock cars; Wednesday, speed trials for Pure Oil dealers, acceleration tests and the annual NASCAR victory dinner; Thursday, time trials for race cars; Friday, February 19, 100-mile race, sportsman's class cars; Saturday, 125-mile race, sportsman's and modified classes; and Sunday, February 21, 160-mile Grand National late model stock car race.

With the last echo of the race cars' exhaust drifting over the incoming tide, plans were scheduled to make the proposed dream 2½-mile speedway become a reality.

Engineers have been studying the suggested site, near the Daytona airport and the Cleveland Indians winter training quarters. An interested principal is Lou Perini, owner of the Milwaukee



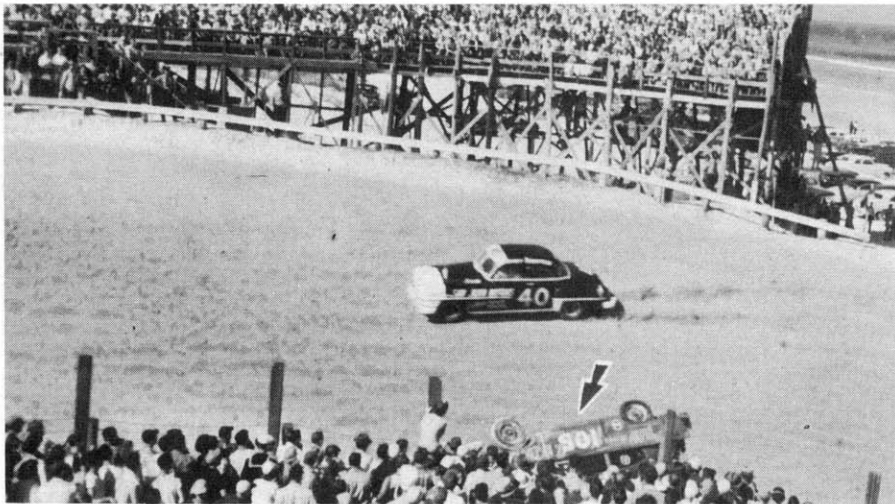
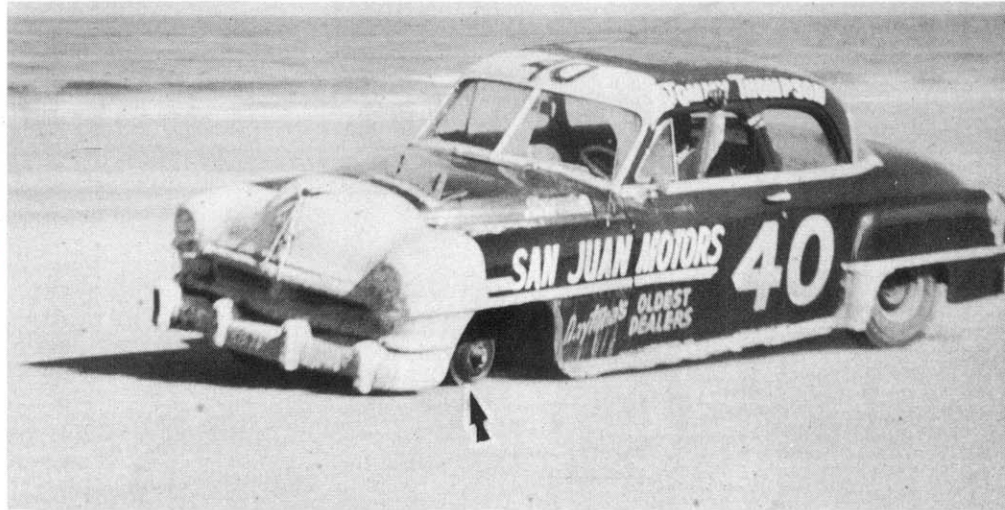
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. . . despite the battered condition of his Olds Rocket.

EXCITING MOMENTS IN DAYTONA

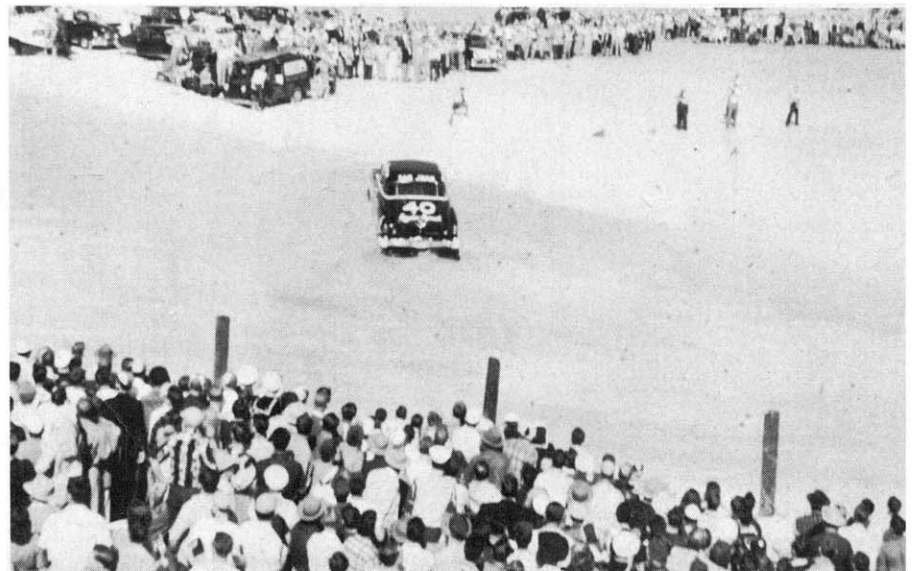
Tommy Thompson, the Louisville, Ky. flash, loses control of his Chrysler on the north turn.

Photos by Don O'Reilly



Thompson regains control in the nick of time and proceeds to race until ...

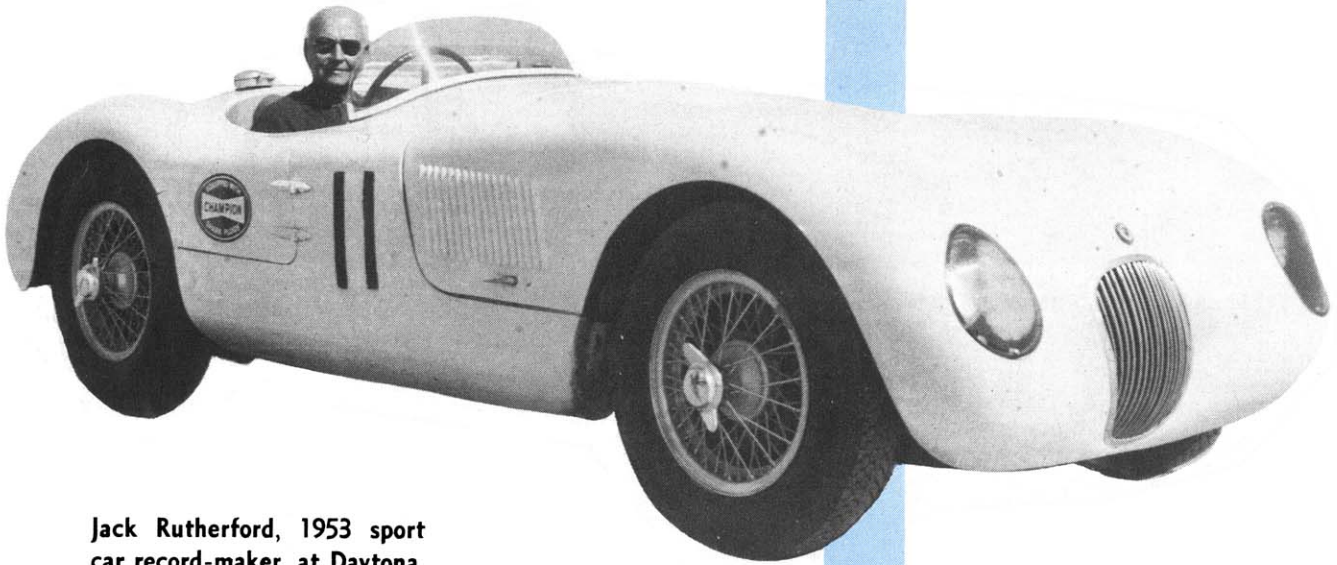
... he loses a wheel later in the race, necessitating a hurried pit stop.



baseball Braves and nationally known contractor. It seemed quite possible that Perini might build the speedway, with private or municipal financing, and also might establish the winter quarters for the Braves at Daytona in conjunction with the speedway location.

Daytona is steeped in auto speed and racing tradition, and with that city being the home of NASCAR, more than a little interest is being evidenced nationally in the activities to come. ☆ ☆

SPEED ON THE BEACH

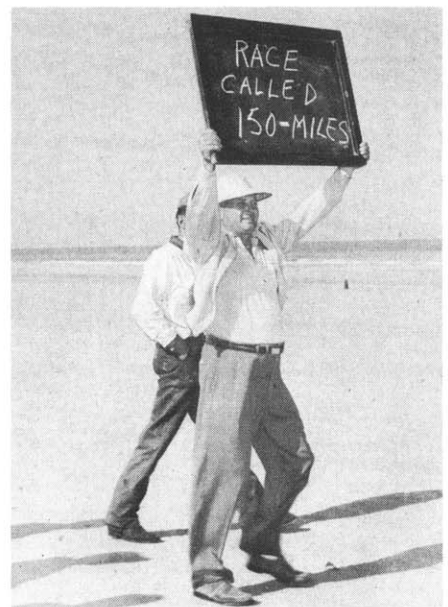


Jack Rutherford, 1953 sport car record-maker, at Daytona.



E. L. Meyers Photo

There are many spills in the thrilling motorcycle races at Daytona.



Don O'Reilly Photo

In '52 Marshall Teague won without a pit stop.



Dick Adams Photo

The pace lap of a Daytona Beach speed week race is always a thrilling sight.

Daytona's Popular Star

By **HOUSTON LAWING**

Colorful Lee Petty of Randleman, N. C., regarded as 'Mr. Consistency' of stock car racing, has been voted as the most popular driver of NASCAR for the second consecutive season.

Petty, a 39-year-old veteran of five years' driving in stock car race competition, was voted by other drivers as the most popular performer in all NASCAR divisions for 1953 and was scheduled to receive a handsome trophy at the annual NASCAR victory dinner February 17 in connection with the annual Speed Week program.

Trailing Petty in the popularity contest voting were Joe Weatherly, winner of the national modified championship for the 1953 season, second; Fonty Flock and Frankie Schneider tied for third.

Petty, who started his racing career by rolling an automobile in his first appearance at Charlotte in 1949, has finished among the leaders in the Grand National circuit for four consecutive years. He finished the 1953 season in second place, just back of Thomas. The three previous years Petty was third twice and fourth once. In addition to his Grand National record, Petty has also finished high in the late model short track division for three straight years.

The North Carolina ace started the 1953 season by winning the first Grand National race at West Palm Beach. Petty missed competition in the Daytona Beach 160-miler last year due to illness, but hoped to test his 1954 Dodge in the grind Sunday, February 21. ☆ ☆



Don O'Reilly Photo

Daytona attracts celebrities such as Zack Mosley, right, creator of "Smilin' Jack" comic strip, and "Flannelmouth" Don Stremmel.