

**I**N MID-MAY of last year, on the hard-packed half-mile dirt track of the Virginia State Fairgrounds in Richmond, before a sun-warmed crowd of Coke-sipping, chicken-chewing Southerners, David Pearson took a 2-year-old car, a 1964 Dodge Coronet that had been built for a tour of national auto shows and had seldom been raced, and struggled for 250 laps, making five pit stops and using 16 tires, to win the 125-mile race and, more than that, set a record for the event of 66.54 mph. The cars were big and fast, but the track was small and slow. On that track, 66 mph sizzled.

It was a wild free-for-all of a battle with the big, bright cars skidding at close quarters around the cramped oval, tearing rubber off their tires, bending their metal bodies in jarring contact, filling the spring air with gusts of dirt-dust, smoke and the stench of fuel in furious quest of a mere \$2050 first place purse and 500 points in the NASCAR Grand National Championship contest. For Davey Pearson, the points were as important as the money.

Cramped in his hot car, his tree-stump-sized forearms bulging as he gripped the steering wheel tightly, his back aching as he hunched forward, young Pearson worked hard to guide his race car through the traffic. The car and tires took an unusual beating. Pearson would lead until he was forced to duck into the pits, would lose the lead, then charge back onto the track and fight his way through the field to regain the lead. In the pits, David's boss and chief mechanic, hard-bitten ex-driver Cotton Owens, sweated heavily, laboring to keep the car in shape.

In the end, Pearson won with such renowned NASCAR stars as Richard Petty, J.T. Putney, Paul Goldsmith and Darel Dieringer trailing. It was a somewhat typical victory in the victory-filled 1966 season for the South Carolina charger, though more spectacular than most. It helped him toward his first Grand National driving championship. And when the 1967 season hits its first

full stride with the rich, prestigious Daytona 500 and race week, it will be "King" David in his brand new car who will be in the spotlight.

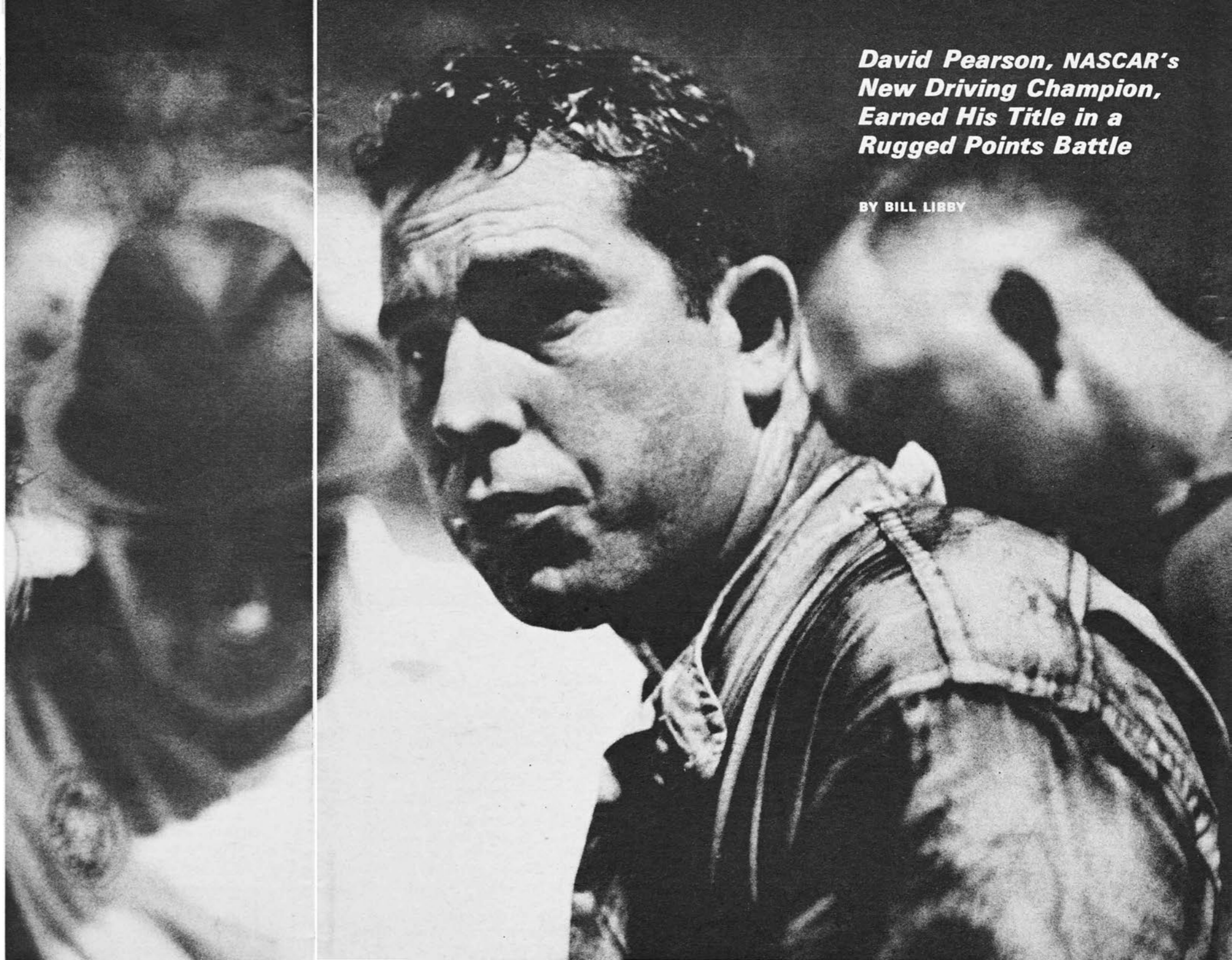
He will not be favored. The favorite will be Richard Petty, who has won the Daytona classic twice in the past three years, or Fred Lorenzen, who won it two years ago, or A.J. Foyt, who has won other major Daytona events, for these are men who excel on the South's four long, paved super speedways, which host the eight big races of the season. Since 1961, when Pearson exploded to prominence with a remarkable run of three super speedway triumphs, he has not won a super speedway race.

He did win 15 races, however, as compared to the all-time record of 18, charging to triumph on quarter-mile or one-mile dirt and paved tracks in such places as Hickory, Winston-Salem, Moyock and Asheville in North Carolina; Columbia and Greenville in South Carolina; Maryville, Tenn.; Richmond, Va.; and Bridgehampton and Fonda in New York. Once he won four consecutive races and twice he won three races of four. Remarkably consistent, he was among the top five finishers 25 times in 38 starts, earning \$59,205 for his team. Only Richard Petty banked more payoff money, \$79,020.

**T**HE NEW CHAMPION is a tall, powerful fellow, 5 ft. 11 in., 185 lb., 32 years of age, handsome with deeply tanned features and dark curly hair that only hint of the Cherokee Indian blood that courses through his veins. He is a small town boy who still lives in his home town, the mill village of Whitney, near Spartanburg, S. C. Davey took his first big purse and bought the small house in which he still lives. He is a family man, with a lovely dark-haired wife, Helen, and three sons, Larry, 12, Ricky, 10, and Eddie, 1. At home, he lives quietly, and is economical and conservative by nature.

David Gene Pearson is a quiet man, almost painfully shy and spare with words. He is self-conscious about his

DAVID R. UNDERWOOD



**David Pearson, NASCAR's New Driving Champion, Earned His Title in a Rugged Points Battle**

BY BILL LIBBY

POINTS CHAMPIONSHIP is won along a grimy, demanding road. The dirt shows on David Pearson's coveralls, the strain shows in his face. For 1966, David entered 14 dirt track events, won 10 and earned two seconds.

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lack of education and the fact that he is not articulate. In the outside world, especially among strangers, he is withdrawn, speaks only when spoken to, and then answers in a few words at most. Determined to better himself, Pearson is considering taking a Dale Carnegie course. Among close friends, especially the other drivers and the mechanics of his racing world, he is more extroverted, a dedicated practical

joker who pokes fun and enjoys getting poked back.

Racing is his life. David was born a few days before Christmas, 1934, on Dec. 22. "From the time I was a little shaver, racing was all I ever wanted," he recalls. "Me and my buddies used to sneak over the old board fence at the Spartanburg fairgrounds and watch the stock cars flying on the dirt track. From the moment I saw them the first

time, I knew this was for me." When he was dating Helen, he was driving an old 1940 Ford coupe and racing on the highways with anyone.

"David got in a lot of races and never lost a one that I can recall," Helen says with wistful good humor. "It always scared me to death and I'd yell for David to stop and let me out. He'd laugh at that. We were married in 1952. I was 18 and David was only

17. Both of us had to quit school to go to work. Getting married didn't slow David's driving. Someone would make a challenge and David would meet him up on the flatlands above Spartanburg for a race. David beat them, regardless of the make or model car."

Four months after their first son was born, David bought an old Ford coach for \$40, went home and announced to an unsurprised but concerned wife that





CHAN BUSH

AT RIVERSIDE, Calif., in January, 1966, Pearson set a qualifying record for the road circuit, then finished second to Dan Gurney in the 500-miler despite being hit by other competitors' cars and being black-flagged briefly for spilling fuel.



CURTIS TURNER broadsides in front of David Pearson's dirt track Dodge in an attempt to cut him off in the turn. Such tactics held Pearson off for a few laps at Spartanburg, S.C., but later Turner made an error and Pearson went on to win.

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he had bought a race car and planned to race it. He spent a week working on the engine, then entered his first race, a short dirt-track event at Woodruff, finishing second and winning a fat \$13.

"I was scared when we went," Helen remembers, "but soon after it started and I saw him outdriving everyone else, I felt relieved. David and I were thrilled when he finished second. As we drove home, neither of us speaking, I realized why I felt relieved. David had found a place to satisfy his lust for speed. He was driving extra careful as we covered the 20 miles back to Spartanburg. From that night on, I don't recall him ever driving recklessly or too fast on the highways."

At first, racing was not Pearson's full-time job. He quit the mill where he had been working, took a job in an auto body repair shop and raced on weekends. Helen said it was all right, so long as he didn't get over-ambitious and risk himself in the big time. For several years he won more than half the races he entered, mainly on outlaw tracks. He knew he had to move up

the ladder and Helen reluctantly agreed. In 1959, as a rookie on the South Carolina Sportsman car circuit, he won 30 of 42 races, including 15 in a row at Columbia, and won the state championship.

"I didn't know anything about weights in a car or anything else when I started," he recalled. "Some of my buddies were helping me. We thought we had to lean to the left, so we all jumped up and down on the left running board of that old jalopy and actually knocked it over to one side. That's the way we went about setting up a car." From that curious bit of mechanical ingenuity, Pearson progressed rapidly, learning fast. When the late, great Fireball Roberts saw him for the first time, he said, "Pearson's a natural."

Pearson leaped to the Grand National circuit in 1960, making his debut in the Daytona 500 and finishing 18th. He drove and was his own mechanic that year with a 1959 Chevrolet and, while he did little winning, he drove consistently enough and im-

pressively enough to be acclaimed rookie of the year.

His second season, 1961, was spectacular. Everything went right for the sizzling sophomore as he won three super speedway classics—the first ever to win that many in a single season. These included the longest race on the NASCAR circuit—the World 600 at Charlotte, N.C.; the Firecracker 250 at Daytona, in which David averaged 154.294 to become the first racer to crack the 150-mph barrier on any circuit; and the \$55,000 Dixie 400 at Atlanta.

Curiously David's small track performances were insufficient for him even to crack the top ten of the drivers' standings, but he completed the season with winnings of \$49,580, a NASCAR record at the time and one heck of a consolation prize.

DAVID AND HELEN had lived with David's parents for five years after they married and had been living in a rented bungalow since then. David was depressed because he had not been offered a new car early in that big 1961 season. Then Ray Fox, the superb Daytona mechanic, offered David a ride in a new Pontiac just before the World 600 in May.



ALICE BIXLER

**DODGE CHARGER**, David Pearson and Cotton Owens proved the top points combination for 1966, but a major speedway victory eluded the team. Above, David held off Darel Dieringer's Mercury to earn third place in the Daytona 500 classic.



**QUICK, SURE** fuel and tire stops, product of Cotton Owens' organization, contributed much to Pearson's point total.



**AFTER PIKES** Peak, David said, "Just give me the good old high banks of the South—dirt or paved—any time."

Recalling that fateful race, Helen Pearson says, "I watched the race in the infield that day with Larry and Ricky. I was never really scared until Red Kagle had a wreck. David was leading the race at the time and I shuddered when I thought about his having to continue the race after such a horrible accident. Kagle lost his leg. The race was run under caution a long time before they could get the track cleared. It didn't bother David because he went on and won the race.

"Everyone came running up to me and started yelling about how much money David had won. I could hardly hear them and I couldn't see them. Tears were rolling down my face.

"An official came over to me and said he'd take me to the winner's circle. When I got there David was kissing June Wilkinson, the movie star. I remember a newspaper reporter asking me if I was crying because he was up there with those beauty queens. I was so happy I couldn't talk. David and I had both dreamed that he might someday be in the spotlight. I wanted him to enjoy it. Later, though, I told him it was okay to kiss the queen . . . but not to let it happen again. It's happened several times since, however, and I'm thankful for it."

David won \$28,000 and a new convertible. David's cut was \$12,000, including the car, the first new one he'd ever owned. And he immediately announced to his wife that he wanted to buy a new house with the money. She says, "I was thrilled beyond imagination. We decided our home would be in the same mill village surroundings that we both knew and loved. I was really proud of David when he told me he didn't care for a big house with a lot of fancy trimmings."

**YEAR BY YEAR**, Pearson moved up in the drivers' standings. From 23rd place in 1960 and 13th in 1961, he advanced to tenth in 1962 and eighth in 1963. In 1964, in 61 starts, David qualified fastest a dozen times, more than any other driver, finished 42 times in the top ten, 29 times in the top five and eight times in first place, and wound up third behind Petty and Ned Jarrett in the final standings.

Probably 1965 would have been his big year, but Chrysler's withdrawal from the circuit left him on the sidelines for the major part of the season. He got into only the last 11 races, winning two, placing second twice, third twice and no lower than tenth in any of them.

He won a 150-miler at Richmond and a 100-miler at Columbia, but he was not set up for anything big, and when the season ended with Ned Jarrett acclaimed the champion, David Pearson was nowhere in sight. However, when Chrysler returned to the wars last year, David was ready and this time it was his year.

Along the way, David teamed up with Cotton Owens, one of the fine drivers of the NASCAR past, who was second to Lee Petty in the 1959 drivers' standings. Cotton crashed at Charlotte in 1951. His face hit the steering wheel, smashing the bones around his eyes. He has suffered from double vision ever since and clearly regrets being out of the automobile race driving profession.

"I still want to drive, no ifs, ands, or buts about it," he admits wistfully, "but I can't. I did drive again in '64. I ran two races, won one and was second in the other. But it wasn't any good. Any time you have double vision, you have real problems, especially of depth. You can't judge where the other cars are. So, now I'm a mechanic. I've always loved mechanical work. It's not driving, but it's all I have."

Owens is more than just a mechanic. ▶



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He has a nine-man racing garage and factory in Spartanburg which turns out high performance parts and does special work on engines and cars on order from other teams. Owens has a contract with Chrysler, which backs him with four cars, two for paved tracks and two for dirt tracks. Pearson works for Cotton as his driver. David is paid a weekly salary to cover his personal expenses and a percentage of his earnings. Reportedly, David gets 40% of his race winnings and 50% of his personal appearance fees.

Married, Owens and his wife, Dolly, have two children, a 19-year-old son and a 14-year-old daughter. Cotton is a tough old campaigner. He and David have their differences, but they work well as a team. "I set up the cars, David drives them," Cotton explains. "As a mechanic, he's only average, but he's sharp enough to tell us about what's troubling a car out on the track for us to fix it.

"I wouldn't trade David for any driver around. He's been good and he's gotten a whole lot better. He is good on all tracks. Maybe he's a little bit better on dirt. I always preferred dirt myself. But he's smooth on any

track. When we were testing tires on the new Dodge Charger, we mounted an automatic camera that took pictures of David's hands on the steering wheel as he drove up to 175 mph. Never once did he move his hands more than two or three inches. You wouldn't believe his smoothness."

David has been criticized for driving overly hard at times. "A lot depends on the situation," Pearson points out. "If you know there are a couple of cars faster than you in a given race, maybe you lay back and draft some and wait for the breaks. But, all things being equal, I'd rather go for the lead. I run flat out, I push hard. I figure the car was supposed to be set up to win the race and if it doesn't hang together it's someone else's fault, not mine."

Curiously, at year's end last season David was criticized for "stroking." His answer was, "I never did that before, but I did it then. I had the title wrapped up if I could just wind up with good finishes. If I'd pushed too hard to win and broke down and got no points, I could have blown it all. So I ran a little easy. I didn't enjoy it, but I figured it was smart. Maybe I'm getting smarter. If I am a better driver,

it's just because of that. You learn something every time you go out on the track.

"Physically, I don't think I'm any better. I run just like I've always run. Just about the same. I guess I'm at my peak now and should stay there for a while. I haven't even thought about quitting. I ought to be good for quite a few years yet. If I had my best season, maybe it's because I was ready or because I had good equipment, but mainly I think it's because I was running more races. I ran just about the whole circuit, which I didn't always do before."

One of the few races Pearson missed was the big Dixie 400 at the Atlanta International Speedway. It all started when Junior Johnson arrived with a 1966 Ford Galaxie for Fred Lorenzen, and Smokey Yunick arrived with a 1966 Chevrolet Chevelle for Curtis Turner; both had considerably altered bodyshells, yet both were permitted to run and were qualified in the first and third positions. A few hours before race time, officials indicated that the 1966 Dodge Coronet prepared by Owens for Pearson had an illegal suspension device and would be disqualified unless it was removed and altered. Angrily, Owens withdrew the entry.

COTTON ADMITTED he had "fudged" a little by installing a device that would enable Pearson to pull a cable

to lower his car a quarter of an inch below required height. "But," he pointed out, "you have to get down on your hands and knees and crawl up under the car and look to see this. After what they let Johnson and Yunick get away with on their cars, I didn't think they'd have the nerve to call us on a little thing like that. The principle involved was NASCAR allowing the other two cars to flagrantly bend the rules while blowing the whistle on others," Owens said.

"Anyway, the car probably wouldn't have performed well enough at high speed without the device for David to be a contender. And I wouldn't want to be responsible for a serious accident under those conditions. Missing the race might cost me and David the Grand National Championship. But somebody has to stand up for what is right."

Missing the race did not cost Owens and Pearson the title. They were headed in the right direction early in the season. His first victory of the year came the first weekend in April in a 100-miler on a dirt track at Hickory, N.C. Pearson followed up with wins in 100-milers on the half-mile dirt ovals at Columbia and Greenville, S.C., and a 50-miler on the quarter-mile paved track at Winston-Salem. He stretched his winning streak to four in a row before settling for a third at North Wilkesboro.

In four consecutive events late in May and early June, David won 100-milers at Moyock and Asheville, missed out at Spartanburg, but bounced back to win a 100-miler at Maryville. In four consecutive events late in August and early September, he won at Winston-Salem, ran third in the Darlington 500, then won a 100-miler at Hickory and a 150-miler at Richmond.

Aside from the 5-stop, 16-tire change "miracle" victory in the 125-miler at Richmond earlier, Pearson produced several brilliant performances. Perhaps the most spectacular came in the 100-miler on the one-third mile paved Asheville, N.C., Motor Speedway. The accelerator stuck open on his 2-year-old Dodge Coronet. With the engine running wide open, Pearson was in danger of running right off the track on every turn.

PERHAPS HE SHOULD have pitted for repairs, but J. T. Putney was pressing him closely with only 40 miles to go. Pearson doubtlessly would have blown the race to Putney had he pulled off the track. Instead, David turned his ignition switch on and off to accelerate and decelerate. In a remarkable demonstration of ingenious, free-style driving technique, David steered and kept his car on course with one hand, worked the ignition switch to maneuver the turns and

work through traffic with the other hand for the last 120 laps of the 300-lap event, and he never was caught.

Everything did not go Pearson's way during the season—far from it. He suffered some severe disappointments. For example, he drove brilliantly to build a 3-lap lead over the great Richard Petty in the inaugural Fireball 300, a 300-lap, 150-mile race at Asheville-Weaverville Speedway when bad luck hit him. He was forced to pit with just five laps remaining. He pulled out and back onto the track with still a full lap of his lead left, but as he reached the track, his tire ran over a piece of metal dropped by another car and the tire started to disintegrate. David struggled to keep his wobbling racer on course at speed after that, but his tire flattened, and finally tore away, leaving him running on the rim. Petty caught and passed him on the final lap.

The really serious flaw in Pearson's season was his failure to win one of the big races. He might have won the Riverside 500 in Southern California in January, had it not been for a startling series of bad breaks. He collided with Curtis Turner at one point, yet kept his bent car running hard. Going into the pits, he was smacked by Paul Goldsmith at another point, again bending his car. He was forced to slow down and make an extra pit stop after being black-flagged for spill-

PEARSON, NO. 1 in points, No. 2 in money, and Richard Petty, No. 1 in money, No. 2 in points, de-grit after a Pearson victory at Columbia, S.C.



DAVID R. UNDERWOOD

PEARSON (6) makes contact with Dieringer as McQuagg leads.



WISE IN the wiles of racing, Cotton Owens, left, and Pearson have become a tough-to-beat alliance.

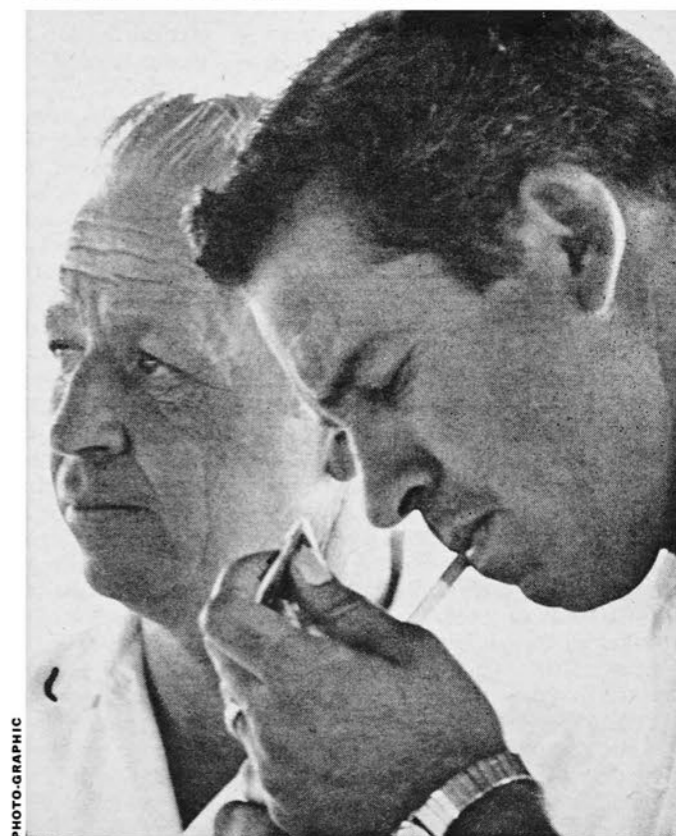


PHOTO-GRAPHIC





**HIGH BANKING** and 160-mph lap speeds take a harsh toll. The fatigue of racing shows clearly in David Pearson's face as he makes a hasty pit stop.

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ing gas from a loose fuel tank cap. Still, he finished second to winner Dan Gurney.

His best finishes in big races were thirds in the Daytona 500, Darlington 400 and 500. "It was little things that knocked us out and slowed us down in most of the big ones," Pearson said. "It's just one of those things and couldn't be helped, but I don't think it has any real significance. It bothers me, sure. There is a lot of money and prestige in the big ones. But I won the title without them."

It is a fact that the startling three big race wins of 1961 are the only ones in David's diary. For that matter, boss/mechanic Cotton Owens never won any of the big ones during his driving career. "It is really frustrating," Owens says. "Maybe we want to win one too much. Maybe we're trying too hard. Maybe I'm over-mechanic-ing and David is over-driving. I don't know. We try everything, but it just doesn't seem to work for us. Things go right all season. We win a lot more than our share. Then we get to a big one and things go wrong. How can you figure it?"

Thus it's obvious that Owens and Pearson will be giving it an extra try at the Daytona classic. Climaxed by the big 500, the classic includes a

week long series of rich races, draws a tremendous paying crowd, and now is likely to draw millions to motion picture theaters across the country if closed circuit TV is presented as planned.

Since the new 2.5-mile high-banked Daytona track was built and the event was moved off the beach in 1959, seven 500s have been contested in that Florida city, with Lee Petty, Junior Johnson, Marvin Panch, Fireball Roberts, Tiny Lund, Richard Petty, Fred Lorenzen and Petty again, winning.

Petty set the race record at an incredible average of 160.627 mph for the 500 miles before 90,000 howling fans last season. Pearson knows he will have to go as fast—or faster—if he is to triumph this time around. "Speed doesn't bother me," he says. "I used to think 150 mph or so was as fast as anyone would go, now they qualify at a place like Daytona around 175. And to tell you the truth, it feels the same at 175 as it used to at 155. Better tires, which give you better grip and feel, and better equipment help you to go faster without ever feeling it."

Pearson is unafraid, possibly because he has never had a really serious accident: "I've never been hurt racing, although I have been knocked around a little. I tore up some cars

all right. Oh yeah, I've been upside down. The first year I was running Grand National, at Columbia, S.C., I was still used to running little cars and I got this heavy old car into a corner too hard, got sideways, went up in the air and landed upside down.

"I try not to think about getting hurt. Comes the time you do that, you're apt to slow up. It's a tough business, I know. It is physically tiring. I don't mind the bouncing around on the dirt tracks. The long races on the paved tracks are just as rough. Actually, I think the longer the race, the tougher it is. Like the 600 miles at Charleston. You are sore and tired and numb by the time that one is run. If you're running behind, it gets monotonous and dangerous. If you're fighting for the lead, you don't have time to think about being sore and tired, you're always working through traffic. I just try not to think about being hurt."

**T**HE WIFE'S VIEW is different. As Helen Pearson sees it: "Being married to a race driver is like living in a show window. I'm supposed to be a nervous wreck, like one of those housewives you see on a TV tranquilizer commercial. When I go to a race, people stare at me like they expect me to faint at any moment.

"I was scared when he raced the first time—I felt a cold chill go up my spine when he came home and told me he was going into the Grand National—when his first car was slower than the models David was competing against, that suited me fine.

"A lot of wives score for their husbands because they say it keeps their minds busy. But I can't stay still. I can't even sit in the grandstand. I want to be where I can walk around so I can see David's car at all times. I guess I'll always have some apprehension about his racing."

Once, she even offered to support him if he'd quit racing, saying she would get a job and take care of the house and children as well.

"As much as I love Helen and the boys, I couldn't do it," Pearson says. "To me, well, I think this is about the best life there is."

So Helen sits and waits, while David races and wins.

David sees some changes ahead in NASCAR. Along with almost everyone else, he thinks the shuttling in and out of the vast automotive firms has been injurious to everyone. David, who sat out most of the '65 season because Chrysler withdrew, thinks all the major companies should race. "We need them and we can help them," he says. "They test their new things in our races. They actually develop their new cars in our races. And they get a lot

of publicity out of it. With the factories in, our cars keep improving. They get faster, but they also get safer. With all the big companies in, we would have really good competition and really good racing."

He does not think total factory participation would harm the "poor-boy" independents. "A guy does the best he can and if he's good enough he'll get a good ride," David said. "If all the big companies were in, there would be that many more good rides to go around. Everyone's got to struggle before they make it. No one steps into a good ride right off the bat anyway. I think you'll find that the same guys would finish up front if we were all supported by factories or if we were all running independents. The good drivers and the good mechanics are going to come out on top."

David is one who thinks a super circuit may develop. "I like running the short races on the old tracks, but it just doesn't pay and if I hadn't needed the points toward the championship last year I wouldn't have done much of it. It's tough on equipment and the payoffs are small. When you reach the point where you have a lot invested and don't need much, it just doesn't make sense to run risks for small payoffs."

"Sooner or later there will have to be more than eight or nine big races a year, there will have to be twice that many, with big crowds and big payoffs and the best guys running hard and risking things for something that's really worthwhile. We'll still have the other races. The young guys, the guys coming up, the guys trying to make it, the guys who aren't quite good enough will run those."

"There's no shortage of drivers. At Charlotte they had 74 entries, the most ever. That meant a lot of guys were shut out. It would be better for most of these guys to have a minor league circuit of their own. They'd have a better chance to prove themselves there than by running against experienced, factory-backed guys."

With success, David has become something of a cool cat. Eating steak the night before a race and chewing chocolate bars just before the race, because he is convinced this gives him great amounts of energy. He cuts up with his pit crew—until fans come around for autographs. He withdraws and becomes quiet then, unable to bring himself to exchange small talk.

Publicist Jim Hunter once was driving Pearson on the highway when a policeman pulled them over. When the patrolman stuck his head in the window, David popped up. "I sure am glad you stopped him, officer. I've been trying to get him to slow down ever since we got on the road. He's

been driving so fast I've been scared out of my wits."

Such jests are usually returned in kind. Stopped by a policeman when pulling out of a race track parking lot and knowing that his new car carried no license plates, but suspecting a put-up job, Pearson regarded the officer lightly. "I've driven this car this way in seven states and no one has stopped me," he smiled. "I'll see you around, officer."

"I'll see you around," the officer snapped. "Downtown." And hauled Pearson in to explain it to a judge.

Among the things David likes to do is "borrow" the cameras of photographers and sneak around shooting pictures of every pretty girl in sight. When the cameramen develop their film later, they are rather surprised at the sort of race action they have.

David flies his own small airplane to and from most races. Usually he lands at small airports, but once at Charlotte he landed in the parking lot while the lot was still empty, and went in to prepare his car and race. When the race was over and he went back to his plane, he found it trapped in traffic. Even hours later, after most of the cars had departed, there were two cars narrowly flanking the strip of "runway."

DAVID DECIDED he could make it between the two, taxied to the end of the lot and sped forward to take off. He did not know a man was sleeping in the back seat of one of the cars. Hearing the plane's noise rushing toward him, the startled man awakened and opened the door to peek out and see what was happening. At that precise moment, David's plane thundered

past, clipping off the car door. Though a chunk was torn out of the wing, David was able to remain airborne. When he reached his destination, he called back to Charlotte to find that the man had charged him with "hit and run flying." David paid.

Fortunately, Pearson has the money these days for such embarrassments.

Coining cash hand over fist, he and boss Owens engage in a continuing free-swinging repartee. Pointing to Pearson and making a face, Owens draws, "I picked this here boy up out of the gutter. He was a has-been at 25. If it hadn't been for me and the sort of good equipment I give him, he'd be racing go-karts back east somewhere. Everything he is, he owes to me. If it wasn't for old Cotton, little David wouldn't of ever been heard from by anyone."

Making a face right back, Pearson says, "Why this here old boy Owens had a little 2-car garage when I came along. If it hadn't been for my fine driving, he'd be pumping gas out in the sticks somewhere and trying to tell the one or two people that pass each day what kind of a fine driver he once was, which he really wasn't. Now that he's got me driving for him, he's got a big engineering company and a new home. He should pray for me every night."

The truth is Owens and Pearson are quality racing characters, well schooled in the hard knock auto business. Separately they would be imposing, together they are enormous. If they can win a big one or two—and the Daytona 500 would be a dandy start—their position atop the Southern stock car circuit will be beyond dispute. ■

THE POINTS/MONEY RACE  
Final Standings of the 1966 NASCAR Grand National Season

Driver, Auto	Start	Finish	Won	Top 5	Top 10	Points	Money
Richard Petty, Plymouth	39	21	8	20	22	22,952	\$79,020
David Pearson, Dodge	42	34	*15	*26	33	*35,638	59,205
Darel Dieringer, Comet	25	10	3	7	9	18,214	51,160
Paul Goldsmith, Plymouth	20	11	3	11	11	22,078	47,760
Marvin Panch, Plymouth	14	6	1	4	6	15,308	47,385
Fred Lorenzen, Ford	11	6	2	6	6	X	36,840
James Hylton, Dodge	41	33	0	20	32	33,688	29,575
Jim Paschal, Plymouth	18	11	2	6	10	16,404	29,415
Sam McQuagg, Dodge	15	7	1	4	7	16,068	27,595
G. C. Spencer, Plymouth	20	9	0	6	9	15,028	25,675
Jim Hurtubise, Plymouth	6	5	1	3	5	USAC	25,260
Lee Roy Yarbrough, Dodge	9	4	1	2	4	X	23,925
Cale Yarborough, Ford	14	8	0	3	7	15,188	23,030
Dick Hutcherson, Ford	14	8	3	8	9	X	22,985
Ned Jarrett, Ford	21	8	0	5	8	17,616	21,685
Buddy Baker, Dodge	41	12	0	1	7	15,402	21,325
Bobby Allison, Chevrolet	33	17	3	9	14	19,910	21,195
John Sears, Ford	46	33	0	11	29	21,432	19,865
Elmo Langley, Ford	*47	28	2	12	20	19,116	19,680
Don White, Dodge	8	6	0	3	5	USAC	19,670

NOTE: \* Tops in that department. X Not in top 20 of point standings.