

THE INEVITABLE FERRARI
VICTORY FALLS TO
LOUIS CHIRON—
FINE PERFORMANCES BY
H. C. HAMILTON
AND EARL HOWE.

THE GRAND PRIX DE LA MARNE

A CERTAIN amount of consternation was caused a short time before the Marne Grand Prix owing to an announcement in a French contemporary that there was some doubt as to the race being held. It turned out, however, that this was only a pardonable ruse on the part of the organisers to force a decision from well-known drivers as to whether they were entering for the race or not. The result was an immediate influx of entry forms, from which the following starters were finally obtained: Moll (Alfa Romeo), Varzi (Alfa Romeo), and Etancelin (Maserati), in the front row, then Chiron (Alfa Romeo) and Nuvolari (Maserati), Hamilton, Sommer and Whitney Straight (all on Maseratis), Brunet (Bugatti) and Soffietti (Alfa Romeo), Balestrero (Alfa Romeo), Zehender (Maserati) and Earl Howe (Bugatti), with Biondetti (Alfa Romeo), all by himself, at the rear. It was hoped that at least one Auto Union would be entered, but the cars could not be prepared in time for the race.

The Rheims circuit is one of the finest in France, being extremely fast and maintained in good condition by the Automobile Club de Champagne. A permanent concrete grandstand and well-equipped pits are also praiseworthy features, and great pains are taken to ensure the success of the race. In practice Guy Moll (Alfa Romeo) beat Nuvolari's last year's record of 2 mins. 58.6 secs., with a time of 2 mins. 57 secs. on the first day. He followed this up during the second and last practice with a fine circuit in 2 mins. 51.7 secs., but this performance was completely overshadowed by Varzi, who got round in the astonishing time of 2 mins. 48.4 secs.!

The Rheims circuit has an atmosphere all of its own. No doubt the perfect champagne, which is consumed in vast quantities, has a good deal to do with it. This year, for example, ten thousand bottles were drunk on the day of the race. Anyway, the excitement was well up to standard on July 8th, and a huge crowd thronged the tribunes and enclosures round the course. Some time before the race started, Armand Girod

made several fast laps on the Delahaye that holds the 48-hour record, while aerobatics were carried out by two famous pilots in Michel Détrouyat and Dieudonné Costes. Then the drivers were announced individually to the crowd, and their cars were lined up in the order given above.

Promptly at 2 o'clock, the flag was given by Charles Faroux, and the 14 multi-coloured cars leapt forward in a perfect start—all but Sommer's Alfa Romeo, which hung about on the line for an appreciable time. Then came the excited period of waiting for the cars to complete their first lap, and everybody craned forward in an attempt to catch sight of them as they roared down the "straight leg" to the Virage de Thillois, where a sharp turn brings them back past the stands.

The cars were not long in coming, and it was not surprising to see Varzi a clear leader, for his red Alfa Romeo had streaked ahead at the start. Behind him came Moll, then Nuvolari, Chiron, Etancelin, Straight, and Hamilton. Three Alfes and three Maseratis handled by six of the leading drivers in Europe to-day! A great roar went up as the cars came round for the second time, for it was seen that Nuvolari had got past Moll and was only 4 seconds behind his old rival, Varzi. Rumours of a possible win for Nuvolari had been running round Rheims on the previous day, and here was proof that he would at any rate be a serious challenger for the Ferrari drivers to contend with.

The third lap was disappointing, however, for the gap between the two leaders had increased to 7 seconds. The order of the followers was still the same, but Straight pulled into the pits for more plugs and retired on the next lap with a couple of pistons gone. This was bad luck, for the English spectators had hoped to see Straight well placed in the race which, last year, marked his *début* in Continental Grand Prix racing.

The duel between Varzi and Nuvolari continued without a pause until the 8th lap, when the latter had to pull into the pits for a wheel-change. Up to this point

his Maserati had shown itself every bit as fast as Varzi's Alfa Romeo on the straights, but inferior in braking power. This stop allowed Moll to regain second place, but he did not hold it for long, and on the next lap it was Chiron who appeared in this position. Two laps later the unlucky Nuvolari had to stop again, and in spite of a 41-seconds delay he set off with great determination in an endeavour to get back among the leaders—for by this time he had dropped to 8th place.

Varzi and Chiron were now engaged in a friendly "scrap" for the leadership, and on the 15th lap the two cars were level. One lap later Chiron came past the stands in the lead, to lose it again on the next, and regain it on the 19th. These two were well ahead of the rest of the field, Moll having stopped at his pit for a tyre change. Etancelin was quick to seize this opportunity to take third place, but the higher maximum speed of Moll's Alfa Romeo enabled the young Ferrari "as du volant" to regain his position after a brief tussle. As for Nuvolari, he had the exasperating experience of puncturing a tyre just beyond the pits, and having to complete a whole lap on the rim. When he came in he took the precaution of changing the tyre on the other side as well, but the stop caused him to fall to 8th place once more. A couple of laps later the back axle of his Maserati gave out, and Nuvolari had everyone's sympathy as his car was pushed away. At the same time, another Maserati withdrawal occurred when Etancelin left his car at the pits with a broken gearbox.

At half distance the cars began to come in for refuelling, the first to do so being Varzi. His stop occupied 1 min. 34 secs., a good deal slower than his team mate Chiron, whose time was 1 min. 9 secs. The withdrawals of Nuvolari and Etancelin had altered the order a good deal, and at this point the positions of the cars were as follows:—

1. Chiron (Alfa Romeo).
2. Varzi (Alfa Romeo).
3. Moll (Alfa Romeo).
4. Hamilton (Maserati).
5. Howe (Bugatti).
6. Soffietti (Alfa Romeo).

THE GRAND PRIX DE LA MARNE—continued.

Sommer was experiencing an endless series of troubles with his Maserati, but in spite of a pit stop on nearly every lap he continued to battle on, and it was not until nearly the end of the race that his gallant effort was brought to an end. Zehender's Maserati gave out, too, thus reducing the Maserati contingent to Hamilton's solitary machine, which, however, was favourably placed, and stood a sporting chance of catching Moll's Alfa Romeo. Hamilton's driving, by the way, was extremely brilliant, and he is now definitely a force to be reckoned with in the great Continental races.

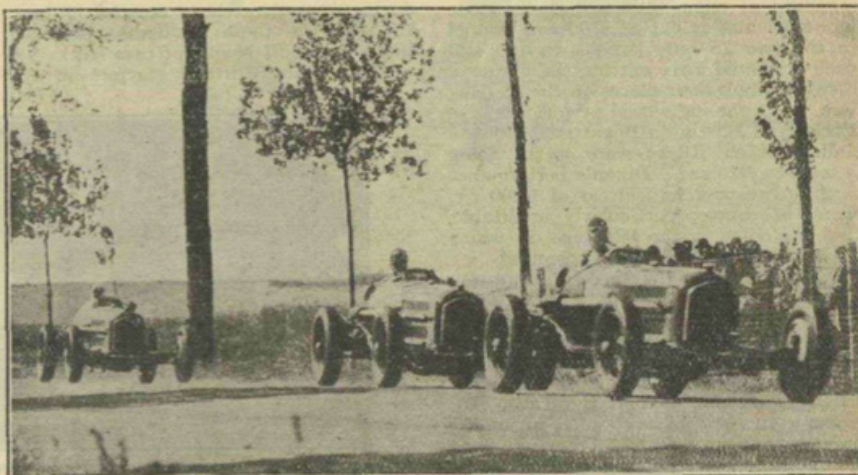
Chiron and Varzi continued their little game of taking it in turn to lead the field until the 41st lap, when Varzi drove into the pits for a new supply of plugs. The rest of the refuelling stops had gone on without incident until Soffietti arrived. For some time this Italian driver had been engaged in a neck-and-neck struggle with Earl Howe, who always managed to keep ahead. In his excitement and haste Soffietti braked too late at the pits, skidded right round and crashed into Etancelin's stationary Maserati, fortunately without serious damage being sustained by either car.

Varzi's car continued to give trouble, and after setting up a new lap record in 2 min. 58.2 secs., he informed his pit staff that some of his gears were "missing." After quite a lengthy delay at the pits the car was taken over by Marinoni, the head of the Ferrari testing shop.

Then came the finish, Chiron being

flagged home a popular winner, whereupon the crowd cheered themselves hoarse, and promptly invaded the road. Chiron was presented to the Deputy Mayor of Rheims, M. Paul Marchendeau, while the loud-speakers brayed out the Italian national anthem and "La Marseillaise."

Whitney Straight being able to carry out a proper plan of campaign in company with Hamilton; and Etancelin being able to carry on with his dashing run until the end. It might have been a different story then, and at any rate more exciting—but "ifs" don't count in motor racing!



Chiron, followed by Varzi and Moll, all on Alfa Romeos, on the fast downhill straight leading to the Virage de Thillois.

Once again the Ferrari-owned Alfa Romeos had finished in the first three positions, although their triumph was a qualified one in that Varzi's car was not in good shape towards the end of the race. One would have liked to have seen Nuvolari free from tyre trouble;

FULL RESULT (500 km. 064).

1. L. Chiron (Alfa Romeo), 3h. 25m. 51.8s. 145.984 k.p.h.
2. G. Moll (Alfa Romeo), 3h. 30m. 27.8 s.
3. A. Varzi (relieved by Marinoni) (Alfa Romeo), 2 laps behind.
4. H. C. Hamilton (Maserati), 3 laps later.
5. Earl Howe (Bugatti), 5 laps later.
6. Soffietti (Alfa Romeo), 5 laps later.

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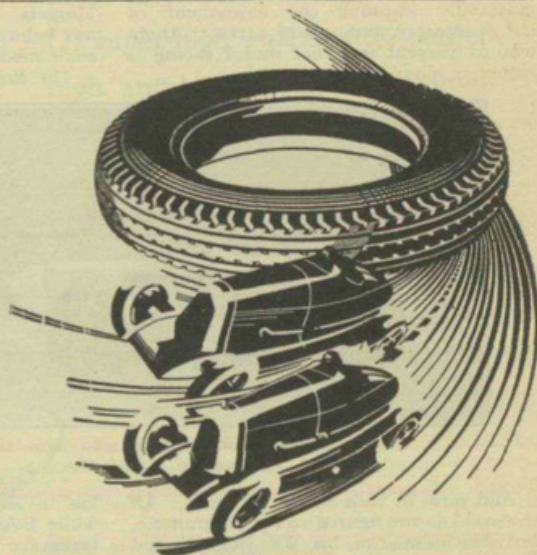
in the FRENCH GRAND PRIX

1st CHIRON (Alfa-Romeo)
at a record average of 85.05 m.p.h.

2nd VARZI (Alfa-Romeo)

3rd MOLL-TROSSI (Alfa-Romeo)

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