

GEORGE BEAHON

## "In This Corner"



If you make enough wrong turns around the Pocono Mountains, you are eligible to find yourself at a place called Pocono International Raceway which is the site for what the auto racing writers call the second jewel in the triple crown of championship racing for the mechanized monsters known as Indianapolis-type cars.

The tri-oval, 2½ mile course recently staged its second annual Schaefer 500, for a modest total not exceeding \$500,000. It is a slick, modern plant which makes the old brick roadway at Indy look like an old brick roadway. Third leg of this triple crown series is held in Ontario, Calif., next month.

That records were destroyed in Time Trials (189 mph plus) and the race was predictable. That no morticians were required was not. It seems the new wings on these dragons make it possible to varoom the straightaways at speeds above 200, but when they try to make it around 500 miles, there are so many breakdowns in hardware the yellow flag slows down the average winning time to a lumbering 150 mph. Fewer and fewer cars finish, but fewer men are killed. Bobby Unser, whose car fractured all trial times, says the racing is safer than ever because the wings keep the bullets on wheels from becoming airborne. He didn't finish.

So maybe the Indy-type racing is safer. At Pocono, there was this curious association of two second generation drivers, Gary Bettenhausen and Bill Vukovich Jr. What they have in common is that both their fathers were wiped out at Indy. Tony Bettenhausen Sr. (there's a 20-year-old Tony Jr. who's racing, but not yet at this level) was in so many contacts with walls he was nicknamed "Cementhead." Ironically, he died not in a race, but testing a friend's car.

Bill Vukovich Sr. was killed while leading the pack and trying for his third successive Indy 500 victory.

"My dad's fate never enters my mind," says Gary Bettenhausen. "I think only about who's in front and who's behind — nothing else."

Bill Vukovich Jr. thinks "about it every time I go past that spot at Indy. But I don't let it dwell on my mind." He was 11 years old, listening to the race on radio, when his dad hit the wall for the last time.

Another Bettenhausen was scheduled to make his debut at this Schaefer 500, in his first year of championship racing on the big apple. This was Merle Bettenhausen.

He didn't make it to Pocono, but he swears he will some day, even though he broke a leg, suffered severe burns, and lost his right arm, while never losing consciousness after hitting a wall at Michigan International, only weeks earlier.

In one of the most dramatic interviews read by these eyes, Merle sat in a hospital at Ann Arbor and told Ray Marquette, a writer-friend from Milwaukee, about losing it.

"I hit it hard, and somehow the visor on my helmet ripped off. When I looked

up, there was this big orange ball, so I knew there was fire. I closed my eyes and threw up my left hand . . . it was getting pretty hot in there and I thought about getting out." (Ed's Note: It takes some real contortion to squirm out of an Indy cockpit when both car and driver are both healthy and stopped.)

Bettenhausen continued: "I started lifting up because I didn't think I was going to hit the wall again. Then I said to myself, 'You're going too fast,' so I started to get back down and then I felt this tug on my right arm. Finally the car stopped and I knew it was on fire so I started to get out again. I couldn't figure why I couldn't lift myself and I looked over to the right and there was no arm. I said, 'Oh, my God. Oh, my God.' You know, I don't think you can get out of one of those things with one arm. I know I couldn't."

Marquette asked Bettenhausen, propped up in his hospital bed, how he was doing now?

"Okay, except the fingers itch on my right hand," said the 29-year-old driver. "And the fingers are not there to scratch."

His recovery from shock and blood loss was so quick and remarkable he was out of intensive care way ahead of schedule.

Now he insists he'll race again, with only one of his own arms.

A driver-friend, Roger Penske, made a call to the hospital and told brothers Gary and Merle, "You guys must be made of iron."

"No," said the mother of three racing sons, and the widow of the famed, late Tony Sr., "they're just Bettenhausens." Interviewer-reporter Marquette didn't editorialize on exactly how she meant that.

JOHN DOSER

## Scholastic Notebook



Doug Farrell, the ex-Cardinal Mooney athlete who knocked 'em dead in baseball and basketball in the diocese three years ago, will return to Niagara University in the fall to complete his last year of school and fulfill his final year as a basketball player, probably a starter.

He fleetingly thought he might end up on the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball roster this summer but has since dismissed the possibility from his mind.

"Pittsburgh gave me a run-around," Doug said in an interview.

"They gave me promises only and I dropped that. I'll wait for the draft," Doug said.

He wasn't really asking too much, Doug explained, just enough to cover his school expenses. But whatever he was asking, the Pirates considered it too much.

His final year at Niagara is worth \$3500 which is picked up by an athletic scholarship. If Niagara feels it has been "carrying" Doug as an "investment," it ought to collect the interest this coming season.

Doug's a free agent in the baseball world now. He did well in a Cincinnati camp earlier this summer — he whiffed three batters in the only inning he pitched.

There's a Montreal scout who's interested enough in Doug's pitching to sign him and Doug doesn't want to pass up the chance which he hopes will still be there next May.

He's burning 'em through the strike zone this summer for the Courier-Journal

Sloan Bruins, a Buffalo semi-pro team in a Buffalo area league which is a cut above last year's Muni League here according to Doug.

"I pitch about twice a week (he won four of his first five decisions) and I'm getting about 11-12-13 strikeouts a game in Buffalo," Doug said.

He's also keeping trim by playing some fast pitch softball for Kodak Park — at shortstop — behind Chuck Stogner, KP's big hurler.

He works in a construction department at the park. Doug often leaves Kodak around 4 p.m., is on his way to Buffalo for ballgames which begin at 6 or 7 p.m., and back home in Greece by 11:30 or midnight.

He doesn't take a dime for playing because he doesn't want to botch his "amateur" standing. "I don't accept anything." I just play," Doug said.

If he's not drafted by another big league team next year he expects to "do it the hard way." He means to try and sign on with a big league club by himself. He thinks Montreal is his best bet.

Doug, now 22, was sixth man for coach Frank Leyden last year. The fact that the Eagles lost Marshall Wingate to the Philadelphia 76ers won't hurt his chances to be among the starters when the first tap gets tipped in December.

His best moment last season was against LaSalle when he dropped in two free throws to break up a tie ballgame with three seconds left on the clock.

"But they're all big games to me," he said.

He played in 27 of 29 games and shot 87 per cent from the foul stripe and 60 per cent from the field while averaging eight points per game.

As a freshman at Niagara he averaged 15 points per game. He told a cute story about Calvin Murphy, now with the NBA.

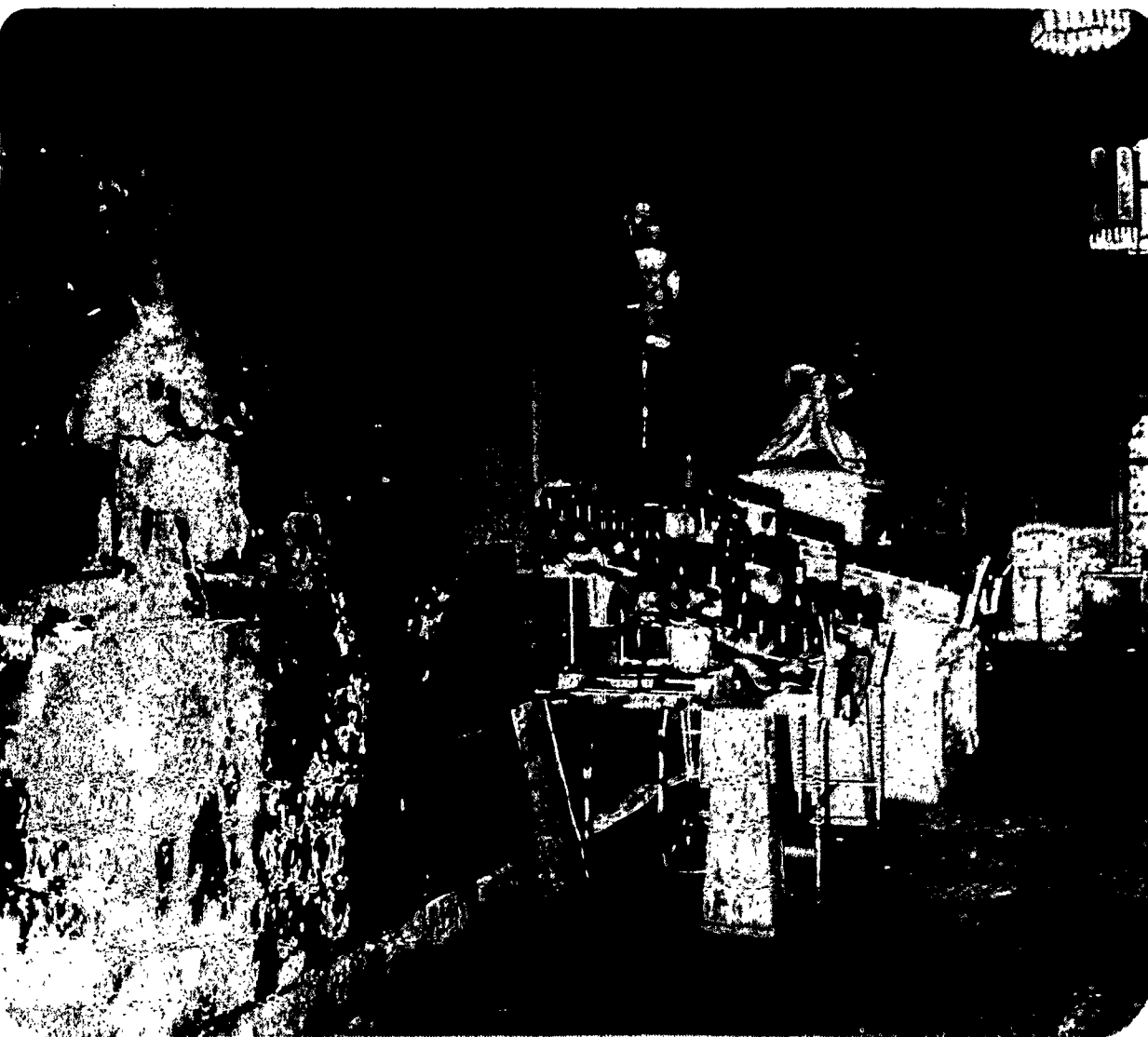
"Calvin really taught me to

protect the ball. One night we played 1-on-1. Calvin and I. I was new, green-nosed, but often stayed late and worked out by myself. He asked me if I wanted to play him. I really didn't, but went ahead anyway.

"He burned 'em in from 20 feet out. Beat me real good. But he taught me that anytime I shot I'd better follow through with the wrist — 'arm up, wrist out, eye on the rim' he told me."

Doug, who weighs around 180 pounds, doesn't actually work out an awful lot anymore. He's in pretty good shape from his job at the Big K. He plays basketball at noon there and also plays in an unorganized league in the city when he's not off to Buffalo.

He also works so hard in "pick-up" games over his noon hour, some of his co-workers are beginning to think he doesn't work hard enough on the job.



Church Fire

Fire damage in the votive chapel of St. Joseph's church, Rochester, shows up in this view as a white streak on the wall where flames reached ceiling. The early morning fire August 2 was discovered by a housekeeper, and put out by Rochester Fire Department before flames had chance to spread.