CAR and DRIVER

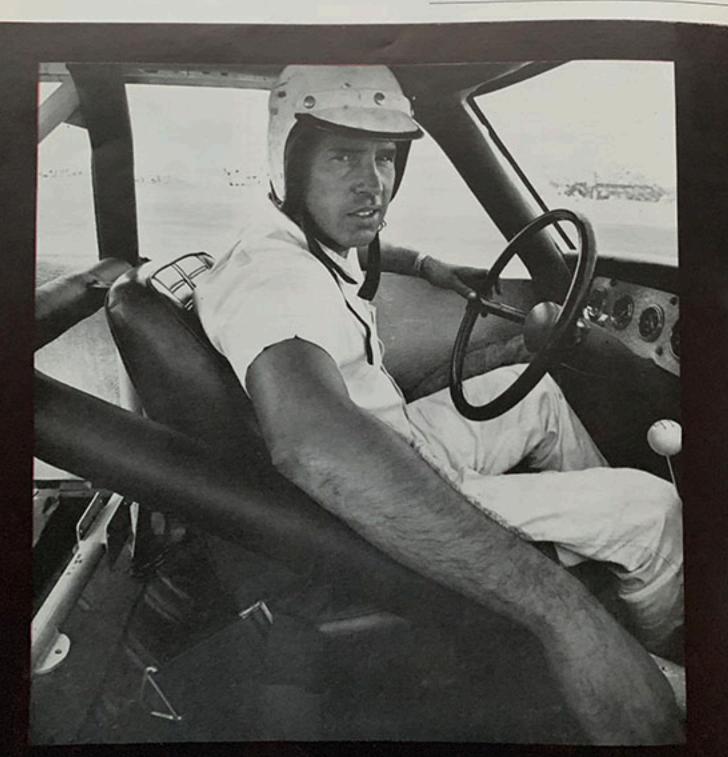
SUNBEAM PLUS FORD EQUALS FLYING TIGER **WE TRY STOCK CAR RACING: IT'S TOO MUCH!** NEW RACING PICTORIAL SECTION, PAGE 63



DAVID PEARSON:

"We went good up here.

I mean we led three races
before some kinda lousy luck
put us out. Ol' Billy Wade,
he got all the breaks an' we
got nuthin. We ain't gonna
start winnin' again until
we head home. You wait."



A TOUGH TOUR WITH **COTTON'S** STOCK CARS

BY BROCK YATES

Cotton Owens' Dodge Racing Team invades the alien North with the rest of NASCAR's colorful Rebel horde

Wade never shoulds won that race. You can't go a hundred miles on a twenty-two gallon tank. It just can't be done," complained Bud Allman as he squinted against the oncoming lights of the New Jersey Turnpike traffic.

Buck Sewell, stretched across the rear seat of the four-place cab of the big Dodge truck in a state of utter exhaustion, mumbled his agreement, but a third rider noted that the protest lodged by Billy Wade's arch-rival, Ned Jarrett, had been disallowed and Wade's first NASCAR Grand National stock car race victory at Old Bridge, N.J., was now official.

"I ain't saying ol' Billy didn't run good. His Mercury was really handlin', and on a flat half-mile that's real important. But you can't go a hundred miles on no twenty-two gallons of gas," Allman repeated. Their driver, David Pearson, who at that moment trailed them through the night, had commanded the race for much of the distance until a stop to change a soft tire

put him out of contention.

'That's the second race in a row that we've lost by a fluke," said Allman. He was built like a middle-weight, with powerful shoulders set on a chunky, compact body. His face was furrowed in the harsh glare of the headlights and only the absence of scar tissue around his eyes indicated that his life had not been spent in sweaty gyms and prize rings.

"But our luck is gonna change at Bridgehampton.

Ain't that right, Buck?

Sewell had managed to find a position of relative comfort amidst the litter of magazines, spare parts, shoes and road maps and was now in a deep sleep. "Lookit that s.o.b. When we get to the motel he'll swear

he never slept a wink. You wait."

The little caravan threaded its way through the labyrinth of streets and parkways between the George Washington Bridge and the Long Island Expressway. Allman was an uncertain leader with the flatbed truck that carried the red and white Number Six Dodge stock car that had run at Old Bridge. Behind him came Pearson, the only man awake in the Dodge station wagon that also carried the boss, Cotton Owens, and his wife and son. Bringing up the rear-until they became separated exiting the Bridge-was the second truck, driven by mechanic Dean Turner, towing the second red and white Number Six Dodge stock car . . . an identical vehicle except that it was set up to run in the two road races scheduled on NASCAR's annual tour of the north.

A thousand miles, three races and no victories lay between them and the familiar red clay of Spartanburg, South Carolina. Four more Grand Nationals would have to be run in the alien Yankee surroundings before they

would return.

"This week is gonna be a bitch," said Allman firmly. "We gotta get one car ready for Bridgehampton, then change the transmission on the car we ran tonight at

COTTON OWENS:

"It's a tough job keepin' a team
of stock cars running, especially
when you're so doggone far away
from home. An' when you hit a
streak of bad luck it's enough to
make a feller wish he was back
racin' again instead of having
all the responsibility."

Old Bridge. Just won't go into first gear. Yep, it's gonna be a bitch."

It was 4:30 Saturday morning when the Cotton Owens racing team—minus one truck and one stock car —arrived at a fog-shrouded motel outside Riverhead, Long Island.

"Boy, I sure wish I'd got me some sleep on the way," grumped Buck as he staggered toward his room. "See that?" growled Bud. "Ain't that something?"

The bedside telephone rattled them awake at 8:30 and, after a long interlude of cursing and eye rubbing, Allman, Sewell and Pearson climbed into the truck to drive the remaining 30 miles to Bridgehampton.

Dressed in the short-sleeve sport shirt that is the trademark of the NASCAR stock car driver, David Pearson drove the truck as fast as it would go, taking obvious delight in hearing the engine roar its protest against downshifts through the two-speed rear axle, while honking and waving at every bystander along the route. He looked younger than his 30 years and his fresh, tanned face bore no scars after nearly ten years of violent racing on the southern stock car circuit.

Dean Turner and Dave Parsons—a youthful assistant mechanic—showed up in the paddock area looking bleary-eyed after snatching a few fitful hours of sleep in the cab of their truck. Nonetheless they had already unloaded the Dodge and were in the process of fitting it with fresh tires when the rest of the crew arrived.

Set on a bleak hump of sand in the middle of the track, the Bridgehampton pit and paddock area is pervaded with an air of eternal desolation, and this day was no exception, despite the double clutter of the stock cars and a small field of sports cars which were running a regional race in conjunction with the NASCAR event. Hunkered down beside the wall of a hot dog stand to seek shelter from a powerful mid-morning sun, Pearson surveyed the landscape and was moved to comment, "this here's the end of the earth, and that ain't no crap."

Other teams began to arrive, the larger ones like the Pettys, Bud Moore and Ned Jarrett bringing at least two identical cars, while others hauled in older, more battered machines with aged trucks and tired station wagon tow cars.

Practice started in the late morning and a row of bellowing stock cars had moved to the starting line before David Pearson walked over to the van and dug a battered Bell helmet from a side tool compartment. He donned it—his only concession to modern safety measures—and got into the car through the window. Someone asked Allman why he didn't wear fireproof coveralls and a shoulder harness. "Hell, he'd run without a helmet less'n they stopped him. But he does wear coveralls in the big races."

They thundered down the pit lane and appeared moments later in a massive, organic formation of bright





colors and deafening noise. The green flag fell and everyone fell to furious dicing, forgetting that this was a practice session. The SCCA corner observers were thrown into panic as they witnessed the entire field swoop off the corners and onto Bridgehampton's treacherous, sandy shoulders. The course marshall's switchboard was flooded with distraught voices reporting every car leaving the course at every corner . . . until it was discovered that NASCAR stock car drivers take a more casual approach to line with their 3700 lb. stock cars than their road racing counterparts.

Pearson interrupted his part in the fun to arrive at the pits and report that the car was geared too low and the suspension was too stiff. Sewell and Parsons silently wheeled a jack into position at the rear of the car and began work. A 4.30 rear end was installed in 15 minutes while Allman and Dean removed two leaves from each rear spring.

Petty, who had been going very rapidly, arrived at the end of the practice session and immediately swung by to find out what was ailing the Dodge. "I followed Pearson awhile, figuring that he could show me the right line. Then when I knew he didn't know where he was going either, I passed him." Allman and the boys dissolved into laughter while Pearson looked sheepish and puffed on his cigarette.

"I'm gonna git me some potted meat," Buck announced and the entire crew—including Cotton Owens, who had arrived shortly before noon looking considerably refreshed—trooped off to the big truck where they lunched on potted meat and Pepsi-Cola. All the while, practicing sports cars buzzed in the background.

A brief 10-lap qualifying heat ended practice. Pearson pushed Richard Petty hard for a few laps, then fell back to finish second. He reported that the new rear end was a big improvement, though it meant having to navigate the entire back sector of the circuit with the Dodge bellowing at 7000 rpm in third gear.

On the way back to the motel, Pearson raced Ned Jarrett's van along the winding road that led away from the race track. He finally captured the lead, accelerating by as the two trucks exited a blind curve, and swept away with a final blast on the horn. Lighting a plastic-tipped cigar, Allman surveyed the sandy Long Island landscape dotted with scrub pines. "This looks kinda like home," he observed wistfully, "with them pines and all."

"Maybe, but I'd rather be home in jail than up here,"

said Pearson.

Showered and stoked with well-done sirloin, the crew received an invitation from the motel owner to attend the weekly Saturday evening floor show and party that he ran in the recreation room. They arrived looking all buffed and polished and took a table near the back while a retired dress salesman told some jokes and a local girl struggled through a selection of

pop tunes. The evening dragged on and most of the guests, including Owens and his wife, went off to bed. Dean and Parsons hung on as long as possible, then gave in to the memory of two sleepless nights and disappeared. Shortly after midnight a bus load of southern newspapermen and their wives arrived as guests of Dodge and the sagging festivities picked up tempo. A card game started on the ping-pong table and Pearson, now decked out in a lei, chatted vociferously with everyone. Referred to by some of the press as "Li'l Abner", Pearson appears on the surface to be a simple country boy with a sort of empty-headed good humor and little or no concern for anything but driving fast. This exterior hides no significant complexities, but he is far from an affable oaf. Like many southern stock car drivers, Pearson grew to prominence in a highly provincial sport, cheered by a small pocket of fans with whom a great rapport existed. Today, with NASCAR stock car racing a giant business under the close scrutiny of major automakers and oil and tire companies, Pearson and his friends find themselves national figures, with resultant demands for witty press statements and cogent remarks to the television cameras. They resemble the country music stars who make the big time and find the harsh exposure of New York show business terribly brutal in contrast to the amateurnight atmosphere of Nashville.

"I hate to make speeches. That's the one thing about this business that bothers me," confessed Pearson soberly. "They wanted me to do a radio show in Spartanburg about stock cars. I tried it for a few nights and felt like a damn fool. Hell, all them people listening in knew me, so what did they want to hear me talkin' on

the radio for anyway?"

Allman and the crew were up early Sunday and on the way to the track without Pearson or the Owens family, who were sleeping late. Conversation centered on the possible resumption of the Wade-Jarrett feud that had begun a few weeks before when they began bumping each other in a 100-miler until tempers flared. Wade won a doubtful first-round victory when he roared out of the pits, met Jarrett as he entered the first turn, and slammed him into the fence. But Bud Allman was speaking the opinion of the majority when he said, "Ol' Ned is waitin' his time and he'll git him, you wait." Having been Jarrett's chief mechanic for five years before joining the Owens team, Allman's statement carried the ring of authority.

The paddock was beginning to fill with people and cars by the time they arrived and unloaded the car. Darel Dieringer, a square-jawed Hoosier who is one of the few Northerners to run the circuit, wandered over as Allman was changing plugs. A teammate of Wade's, he generally restricts his efforts to the major NASCAR speedway and road races.

"You sure were a brave mother, runnin' that close

behind Paul Goldsmith like you done in practice: said Allman.

"Hell, I had to keep up," said Dieringer, a broad smile crossing his face.

"You know he was outa control over all them back corners?"

"Hell, yas."

"How would you know? You was too close to him to see."

"What do you mean too close? I could see him wayin" at me with his elbows. Man did he take a ride."

Allman laughed. "Was it a good 'un?"

"Man, oh man, way over yonder. He musta gone a hundred yards off the track."

Because they are so well protected in the massive roll cages and bodywork, NASCAR drivers take great delight in recounting the wild exit of a competitor from the track. So long as no personal injury is involved, a spin or crash is a great source of amusement and anyone being so indiscreet as to lose control in spectacular fashion can count on being ribbed mightily.

As race time approached, sports car types milled curiously around the stock cars, seemingly oblivious to the one-hour Regional event that was droning monotonously onward out on the track. The NASCAR boys, unused to rubbing elbows with the female gender in pit and paddock areas, went about their work with erotic fantasies dancing through their heads. The display of tight slacks and shorts left them breathless with excitement. "I'm gonna git me a sporty car and some tennis shoes an' see if ah cain't pick me up one of them frazzly-haired dollies," drawled one as he slid beneath a car.

The race was an exquisite punishment of the senses. One hundred fifty miles in length, the stock cars engaged in a desperate battle for the entire distance, with Pearson maintaining command during the latter laps. Richard Petty lunged off the pole position (from a flying start) and led half a lap until he spun. Pearson, Dieringer, Goldsmith and Wade then grappled for first while Petty raced after them, He had regained all but eight seconds when he rolled into the pits with a blown engine. Goldsmith fell by the wayside, then Dieringer. leaving Wade and Pearson to fight it out. Though the Dodge had probably 140 more horsepower, Wade was able to hang on by dint of better handling and the two exchanged the lead on several occasions.

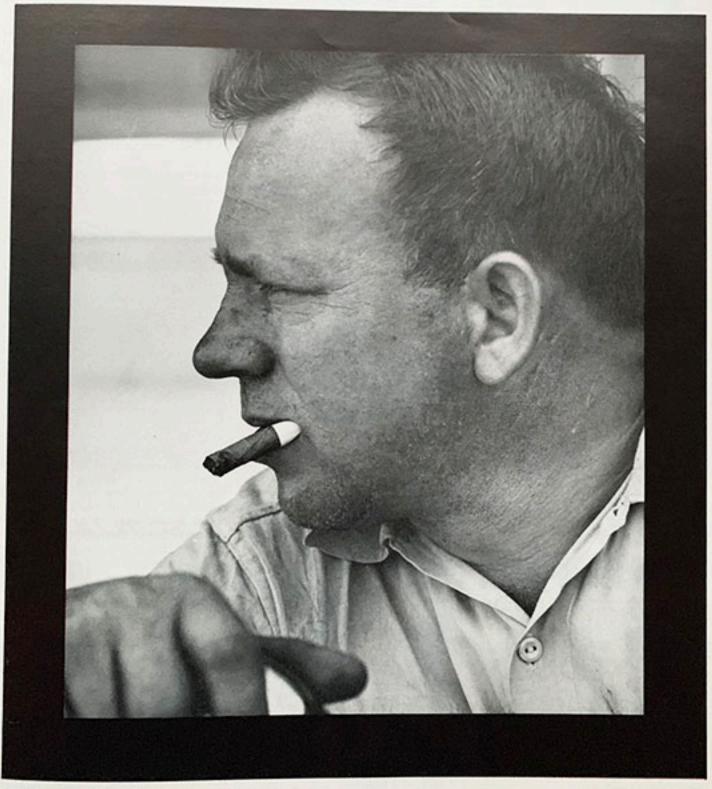
"Pearson's runnin' hot," shouted Allman as he roared past the pits with Wade snubbed against his rear bumper. The crew agreed that they had seen their driver pinch his nose-the standard signal for high temperature-though he later explained that he was "just

wavin' at ol' Billy."

As serious a driver as Pearson is, the Bridgehampton race did not bring him to a competitive peak, Like some of his fellows, he thoroughly (Continued on page 98)

BUD ALLMAN:

"I don't know rightly
how much time I spend on the
road every year, but it's a lot
and sometimes I miss home
something terrible. This
here is a tough business,
but then there ain't nobody
forcing you to stay in it."



enjoyed the road course and went about his work with considerably more jocularity than might be expected from a hardened professional. Following the race, Wade reported that during the peak of his dice with Pearson, he had spun wildly.

"When I was flyin' off yonder, I looked over and there was ol' Pearson smilin' at me. You know, that son-of-a-gun slowed down and waited for me?"

Pearson and Wade each made a frantic pit stop and their crews tossed aboard 22 gallons of fuel in 20 seconds. Tire changes weren't necessary. With 11 laps remaining, the lead seemed to be opening in favor of Pearson and the Owens crew was sensing victory. Then their man coasted into the pits. His engine had blown.

Pearson climbed somberly out of the car, his navy blue sports shirt bathed in sweat, and lighted a cigarette. The curious swept around him while he and Owens discussed the ailment. There was nothing to do but load the car and go home. Wade went on to win his second consecutive Grand National race, with Buck Baker a distant second.

Monday was gripped in a gray summer rain when Owens and the rest left Riverhead for the 50-mile trip to Islip, Long Island, where a 300-lap race was scheduled for the one-fifth mile Islip Speedway on Wednesday night. Owens discussed his plans as he headed through the miserable weather. "We'll replace the transmission in the short track car at the motel tomorrow. Then, after Islip, we'll pull the engine and use it as a spare for the car that we run at Watkins Glen on Sunday. Dean and Parsons can take the short track car home and start helpin' the other fellers get ready for Bristol." (At that very moment, several other mechanics were laboring in Spartanburg to prepare two Dodges for the Volunteer 500 at Bristol, Tenn. Pearson and newcomer Earl Balmer would drive.) "Then me, Buck and Bud will change the blown engine at the Glen. I don't like to split the crew up this way, but when you're this far from home, you ain't got much choice."

The next two days, which continued cold and rainy, were spent in the parking lot of a motel near Islip changing the transmission and making routine preparations for the 300-lapper. Several other crews, including Bud Moore's, Lee Petty's and Ray Fox's, were working in the same lot and the drudgery was relieved by sporadic crap games for rather

impressive amounts of money.

Wednesday dawned sunny and the morning was spent horseplaying at the motel's pool prior to the race that evening.

Compared to most of the tracks on which the Grand National stock cars run, Islip was a silly miniature; compared to Bridgehampton it was like running on the rim of a china saucer. One-fifth of a mile of slightly banked pavement, rimmed with rickety grandstands, it was the scene of weekly races for assorted outlaw modified stock cars and occasional midget events. The Grand National cars looked outlandishly large as they skidded and worried their way around the tiny oval during practice. But their bulk was deceiving and after a short time Wade, Pearson, Petty and Jarrett were lapping at 14 seconds.

Wade's good fortune continued and by the time trials ended he had secured the pole position in his faithful black and red Mercury. He was smaller than most of the drivers, probably not more than 150 lbs., and, like Pearson, looked younger than his 34 years. A shy native of Houston, Texas who had raced in the dusty backwaters of the sport for a decade before getting his break with the Cotton Owens team the year before, Wade's two consecutive wins had been absolutely unexpected-probably even to himself-and he bantered with his fellow drivers with noticeable selfconsciousness, as if he feared that any display of satisfaction over his recent glories would somehow jinx his luck. Whatever Wade was doing, he was doing it right-he would not err for two more races.

Pearson managed to qualify fourth, though he complained that the car was not handling and was down on power. The sun had disappeared and the meager battery of lights had been turned on around the track when Cotton Owens gathered his crew together in the paddock. "We ain't takin' no rubber to the pits," he said firmly, "just some gas."

"But Cotton," protested Buck Se-

"But Cotton," protested Buck Sewell. "if Pearson cuts a tire or somethin', we gonna have to change . . ."

"We ain't gonna change no tires, Buck, and that's that. On a lousy little track like this, a stop for rubber will cost you a minimum of five laps. If you're leadin', you'll lose at least five places and it stands to reason you'll be lucky to finish higher than fifth or sixth. For the purse they're payin', it ain't worth the wear and tear on the car. It just ain't economical and that's all there's to

it." Coming from Owens, a man who had begun racing in the woolly days following the war and become one of the greatest drivers in the business before eye trouble forced him to retire, the strategy made sense.

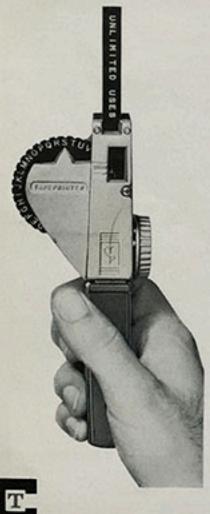
The race started with 20 of the big automobiles wedged onto the tiny track. The insiders knew the traffic would clear slightly during the early stages, as it had at Old Bridge, because Lee Petty would cruise awhile and come in with his son's spare. Jarrett's mechanic, James Henry, would do likewise with their extra car, and Darel Dieringer was planning to save his Mercury for Watkins Glen after a few casual laps.

Somehow the field swept through the opening stages without incident and Wade jumped into a short lead. The noise filled the arena until it hammered all attempts at speech into particles of nonsense and the crews resorted to communication with a series of impromptu hand signals. The cars swirled around until the leaders mingled completely with the stragglers and there was no discernable beginning or end to the field. The faster cars used the outside groove for passing, and it was while Bob Welborn was putting a lap on a slower car that he lost control and whacked the wall. Wade nicked him during the flurry and rushed into the pits to have his crew bend the left front fender away from the tire with a crowbar. Pearson, who was holding fourth while understeering badly in corners, came in for fuel. But it was all for naught. A few laps after the caution flag had been lifted, he nudged a car and the dented bodywork cut apart the left rear tire. Pearson limped into the infield and parked.

Shortly after the halfway point. Wade was closing in to lap the second place car, driven by Ned Jarrett, and attention in the pits centered on the expected confrontation. A knowing smile crossed Allman's face as he pointed to the two cars. The track was so small that the crewmen in its middle were forced to spin in small cirles to keep up with Wade and Jarrett—as if they were tethering gas-powered model air-planes in flight.

Wade caught his rival as they accelerated onto the short backstretch and whipped to the outside. Jarrett countered by steering hard right, forcing the Mercury into the wall. Had he waited a split second longer, he would have had his man, but, in an error caused by eagerness, he moved too early and Wade escaped by slamming on the brakes. Now it





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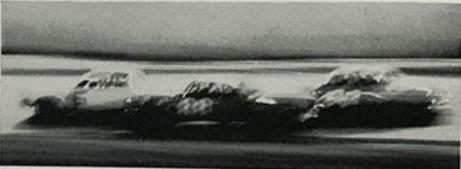
STOCK CARS CONTINUED

was Wade's turn. It is within the repertoire of every major-league stock car driver to spin an adversary by nosing inside during the entry to a corner and shoving him out of the way, but this tactic is generally so neatly executed that no one can honestly say that it was not an accident. But if Wade could have picked off Jarrett it would have been no accident. Several times the substantial front bumper of the Mercury hooked into the blue flank of the Ford, but Jarrett wriggled free. He was driving as fast as he could, aware that a slackening of pace would bring Wade against him like a freight train. At the same time Wade was trying to figure a way to nip past Jarrett without leaving himself vulnerable. The duel continued unresolved for several laps until, with what seemed to be an undeclared truce, Jarrett suddenly moved to the outside and Wade rushed past.

tories to his credit for the season, but the recent famine was beginning to blur those memories. Three of the last four races had been in Pearson's pocket when mechanical trouble slowed him, and that bothered Owens, Sewell and Allman terribly. A thunderstorm was rattling against the sheet metal building as Cotton tightened the last bolt on the replacement engine's water pump and looked up, unsmiling, at Allman. "Pearson ain't gonna drive this race track like he did at Bridgehampton. He does, an' he's gonna find himself planted against a tree."

Everyone, including Pearson, was careful on Saturday. They drove with every intention of staying within the Glen's unforgiving perimeters and therefore lap times were not quite as impressive as on the Long Island circuit (where Petty had gotten to within four seconds of the absolute track record.)

Still unhappy with the handling,



After he had taken the checkered flag for his third race in a row, Wade burst out of his car and was about to strike out after Jarrett on foot when his crew members grabbed him. Though not moved to violence against a man whom he outweighed by 40 pounds, Jarrett kept the feud alive by again protesting Wade's victory, claiming the scorers had missed a lap when Billy stopped for repairs.

On Thursday, two days before the 150-miler at Watkins Glen, Sewell and Allman drove to the track's technical inspection building, where they teamed with Owens to change engines in the Dodge and prepare it for Saturday's race. Dean and Parsons left for home with the other truck and the Dodge public relations people arranged for Pearson to remain on Long Island to run a drag race against Richard Petty on Friday evening.

There was precious little joking at Watkins Glen. The Cotton Owens team needed a win very badly to buoy their spirits. Pearson stood a solid fourth in the point championship, with four Grand National vic-

Pearson managed to qualify fifth. Wade was on the pole beside his old acquaintance, Ned Jarrett, as the field streamed across the starting line and squirmed out of sight over the hill. Thundering up the straightaway, LeRoy Yarborough's Dodge dug a couple of wheels into the shoulder and flung a stone against Pearson's windshield. It smashed into the cockpit like a machine gun slug, spraying glass into his right eye. Half blinded, he struggled on through the July heat. His depth perception gone, he drove too deep into several corners and spun trying to maintain his position. By the halfway point the pain had become unbearable and Pearson rapped his helmet as he accelerated past the pits. "He wants relief," shouted Owens, and Sewell raced off in search of Richard Petty who had hit a fence early in the afternoon. He was ready when Pearson veered down the pit lane and clambered out of the Dodge, pawing at his eye. He half-fell, half-climbed over the counter and someone immediately hovered over him with a white handkerchief. Pearson sat gratefully

still while three chunks of windshield were scoured out of his eve.

The Dodge wouldn't start. Petty ground ruthlessly on the starter, but the massive engine twisted over without firing. "She's flooded," someone shouted, and a mob of volunteers shoved the car off down the pit lane. Still nothing, and then one of the pushers spotted a Civil Defense jeep parked near the pits. Shunting a baffled patrolman out of the way, he jumped behind the wheel, crammed it in gear, maneuvered it behind the stock car and shoved it off toward the infield. Moments later the white Dodge appeared, its engine bellowing angrily, and whipped onto the track. The truck was returned by its captor, a crew-cut Canadian named Al, to its dumbfounded owner, who might have shot and killed anyone else who dared to take his jeep.

It didn't make sense, but Wade had the lead and there wasn't anybody near him. The pit stops for gas were over and only Jarrett was within striking distance. Twenty laps were left when the blue Ford began to close the gap and a wave of excitement swept through the pits. "This may be it. Jarrett's making his move. Wade had better watch it now," someone warned. Jarrett got to within seven seconds of the lead when his engine blew, letting Bill Wade home to win at 98 mph. Petty could not improve on Pearson's position and finished fourth.

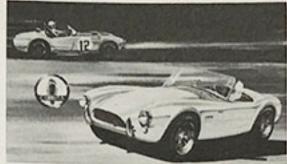
Another loss, "Some day, by God, we're gonna win one. Yessir, we're gonna win one," said Bud Allman firmly as they loaded the car on the back of the van.

"Not until we get home," said Pearson, the brightness gone from his voice. "Nope. We ain't going noplace until we get home. Maybe that'll change our luck."

"We're headin' there tomorrow," said Cotton Owens. "One more race in Pennsylvania and then we'll be back, "We get back home and things will be better. You wait and see."

(Editors note: it was at this point that the Cotton Owens racing team and C/D parted company and nothing was heard from them until a telegram arrived at the office a few days later. It read, "DAVID PEAR-SON WON HIS FIFTH GRAND NATIONAL RACE HERE AT THE HANOVER, PENNSYLVANIA DIRT TRACK LAST NIGHT IN A 1964 DODGE, RICHARD PETTY WAS SECOND AND JIMMY PAR-DUE WAS THIRD." Their luck had changed. They were on the way back home.) CO

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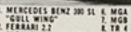
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