

Jews in Sports

By MORRIS WEINER

Mauri Rose

With a rush and a roar, a stench of gasoline and burning oil, orange flame and black smoke belching from the exhausts, the thunderbirds zoomed down the straightaway at the Indianapolis Speedway in the annual Memorial Day Classic. And even as the gas buggies were rocketing along the half-mile stretch in front of the grand stands at a 150-mile-per-hour clip, the judges deemed it wise to wave the caution flag . . . the flag which continues the race and permits the grind to be finished but which allows for no change in position after the 375-mile mark.

Thus it was that diminutive Mauri Rose, one of the smallest drivers in this most peculiar sport, finished third and in the money. Mauri, the country's top Jewish auto racer, has finished in the second or third positions at the Indianapolis track on three different occasions. Once after leading the field for three and a half hours and with but one hundred miles of the race still to be covered, his machine swerved off the banked turn and broke a piston ring. That was his nearest to a victory on the nation's most famous track—incidentally his closest shave.

But the dapper little fellow never says die and vows he won't quit racing the speed wagons until he places in the number one slot at the Indiana track. Once in 1936, Mauri was number one in the A. A. A. ratings but the thirty-year-old native of Indianapolis would gladly trade three of the A. A. A. championships for one Memorial Day victory. And Mauri says he'll make it, if he lives that long. Grim humor, eh what? But that's the fellow's outstanding characteristic after you've noticed his stature, his Chaplinesque mustache and his abhorrence of the conversational art.

Defying Death

"Death-defying" has become a trite term since the circus ringmaster grabbed this phrase to describe the parlor tricks of the tight-rope artist high above the sawdust arena. But believe you me, these indoor aerial acrobats are but playing tiddly-winks when compared with a rousing dash down the speedways at a 130-mile clip. We know what it feels like and we have an idea what Mauri must feel for it was this same Mauri Rose who gave us our first and only "spin" with a racing charioteer.

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inaugural ceremonies with a five hundred mile race over the most dangerous course in the land. Our first sensation on viewing the blueprints of this fantastic layout was that of a pretzel on a binge. We couldn't add much after our first trip around. Sixty of the world's leading drivers had assembled for this opening event and Mauri Rose won a qualifying spot. And as he was the only Jewish driver in such an illustrious field we had gone down to pay him homage. Now Mauri never says much and no sooner had we expressed wonder on how it feels to ride in a juggernaut than Rose said, "Come on."

Anybody who has driven a car on a lonely patch of highway must have succumbed at one time or another to the definite hypnotism about high speed and opened the family buggy wide open. At sixty or seventy or even ninety miles an hour, it is you who are rushing through space like a comet. But at velocities beyond that it is exactly the opposite.

As Mauri pushed his gas pedal to the floor, we felt as though we were suspended, shaken, rattled, and half choked in a stationary object that is the center of an utterly mad and terrifying attack by ordinarily immovable objects. Trees, houses, walls, bridges, roads, grandstands, leaped at us with incredible ferocity.

At 130 miles an hour over the Roosevelt Raceways, it was a world gone mad. Objects in the distance first seemed to crouch as we started down the straightaway, then they began to creep forward and suddenly they sprang at us with a terrifying "PAH!"

Fortunately, and we repeat this word now with thankful amens, the track is so constructed that the car has to be slowed down to a ninety-mile an hour snail's pace in order to make the many and intricate turns of this pretzel-bending course. But even at this speed, the sensation is terrific. Our body had been traveling straight ahead at an abnormal pace and when Mauri made the turn, only our eyes accompanied him. Stomach et al seemed to sail straight ahead and you can get a very mild picture of what happened to us by remembering the last time you were in an elevator that stopped suddenly on its way up. Only ours was a hundred-mile pace. Yessir, that was our first and only trip in a racing chariot and believe it or not we couldn't go near an automobile wheel for months after that little "spin."

Incidentally, Mauri was the first American across the line during the actual race even though he finished sixth to Europe's six foremost riders. For this feat, along with some other commendable records, Mauri was awarded the coveted Number One Driver spot by the A. A. A. as we've pointed out before.

We do hope he wins the Memorial Day Race next year and then quits the speed racket forever. The guy's too nice to wind up as a battered hulk on some