

The German Drivers

Here are some intimate glimpses at the men you will see at Donington to-morrow—the men who have made modern Grand Prix racing the world's most stirring spectacle

By

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(Author of "Motoraces")

HATS off to Fred Craner for his initiative in getting the two crack German teams of Mercedes and Auto-Union to compete in the Donington Grand Prix, on Saturday, October 2nd. This is the first time that either of these teams has raced in England.

As I have just returned from a five-weeks' trip with the Mercedes-Benz racing team, the Editor of SPEED thought that you might like to have a few comments concerning the drivers and cars.

Both Mercedes and Auto-Union have entered their full teams, Mercedes to be represented by Rudolf Caracciola, Hermann Lang, Manfred von Brauchitsch, and Richard Seaman, with Christian Kautz as reserve driver, and Auto-Union by Berndt Rosemeyer, Hans Stuck, Rudolf Hasse, with Herman Muller as reserve driver.

Rudolf Caracciola is not only the German Road Racing Champion for 1937, but is also European Champion by virtue of his wins in the German, Swiss and Italian Grands Prix, and his second place in the Monaco Grand Prix. It goes without saying that he is a tremendously fast driver, but at the same time, he does not look fast, as the car never slides wildly on the corners. Caracciola seems to anticipate what the car is going to do long before it does it, and turns the steering wheel accordingly. His style might well be studied by some of the budding English drivers, who would go a lot faster if they were a little less hectic on the corners, and a little more delicate with the tiller!

Lang has, in two seasons' racing, come to the front rank of Grand Prix drivers, and this year won both Tripoli and Avus, the two fastest races in the world, as well as finishing second in both the Swiss and Italian Grands Prix.

Brauchitsch can go just as fast as anyone else, but he is inclined on occasions to be a little wild. This year he won the Monaco Grand Prix, was second both in the German Grand Prix



"Caratsch"

and Coppa Acerbo, and third in the Eifelrennen and Swiss Grand Prix. You can easily recognise him because he always drives in a red helmet.

Dick Seaman needs no introduction to Donington fans, for in 1936 he did the hat trick, winning all three big races in three different cars. This year he had a very bad crash in the German Grand Prix, and has only just recovered. For all that, he was second in the Vanderbilt Cup Race in America, and fourth in the Italian Grand Prix, three weeks ago.

Kautz, the reserve driver, has driven several times in this country before, and this year has had some remarkable experience in Grand Prix racing.

Now we come to the Auto-Union "meteor," Berndt Rosemeyer. This year Rosemeyer has by no means had it all his own way, but for all that he has succeeded in winning the Eifelrennen, the Vanderbilt Cup and the Coppa Acerbo, as well as being second at Tripoli.

The smiling Hans Stuck has been to England twice before to compete at Shelsley Walsh, and although he has not had very much luck this year, he

can still go very fast when he feels like it, as was evidenced by his win at the Freiberg Hill Climb.

Hasse is a recent addition to the Auto-Union team, and he succeeded this year in winning the Belgian Grand Prix. He has only just recovered from an unpleasant crash he had when coming out of the tunnel on the first lap of the Monaco Grand Prix.

Muller, the reserve and a recruit to motor racing, was a very successful D.K.W. motor cyclist, but so far has merely been feeling his way in the Auto-Union, which is very tricky to drive.

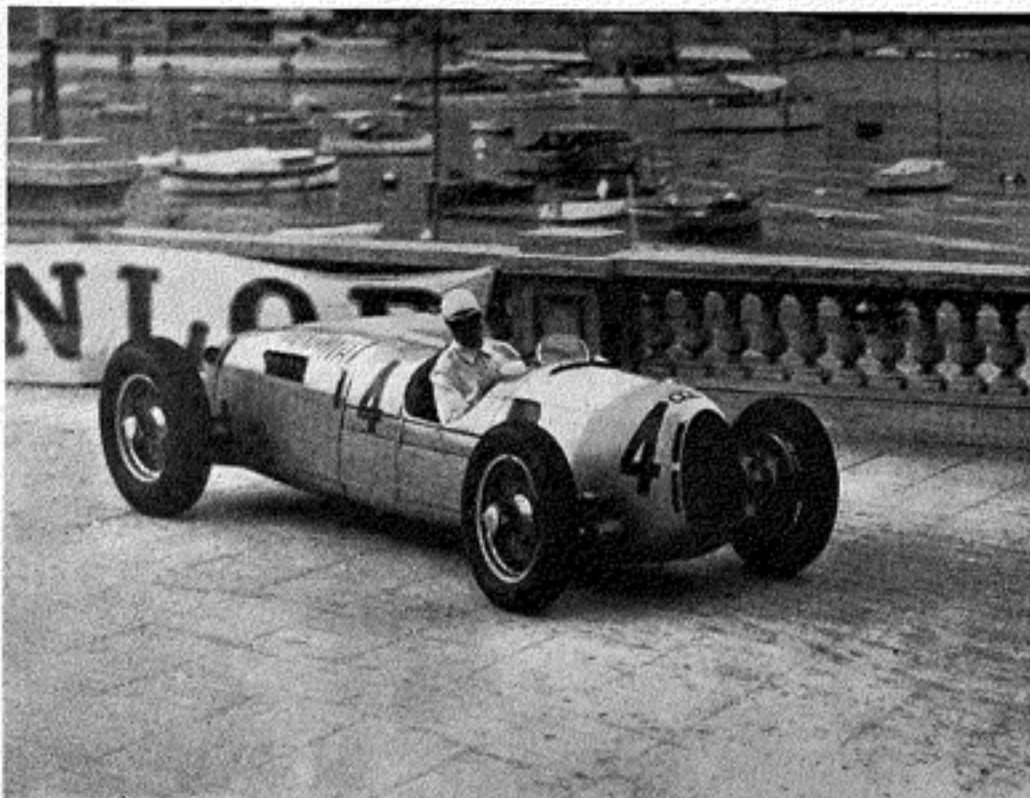
So much for the drivers:

The Mercedes équipe will come by road from Stuttgart in a large number of huge Diesel lorries. They will bring with them five cars, four for the race and a spare for practice, as well as the travelling workshop—a most

impressive sight! In charge of the racing équipe is Alfred Neubauer, the most efficient team manager anyone could wish to have. You will easily recognise him by his portly figure, walking about in front of the pits with a small red and black flag in his hands, getting everyone properly organized.

Uhlenhaut, one of the designers of the 1937 cars, will come in person, and during practice it is quite probable that he will drive some of the cars round himself, especially if there is anything which the drivers cannot explain to Uhlenhaut's satisfaction. Naturally, it is a very great advantage to any team to have an engineer designer who can also drive the car at racing speed without running into things!

Mercedes will bring about twenty of their best racing mechanics with them, in charge of Zimmer and Lindermeyer, who generally do the biggest share of the work during the pit stops. Incidentally, the Mercedes pit stops will be one of the big features of the race, and well worth watching. You will see them change two rear wheels and refill the tank with petrol in 30



mark. It must be remembered that none of the drivers, except Seaman, has ever seen the circuit before, and it will therefore take them several practice laps before they start going really quickly, although both Caracciola and Rosemeyer seem to be able to sum up a new circuit in a remarkably short time.

A particularly good close-up of Berndt Rosemeyer in the Monaco Grand Prix. Note the apparent unconcern of the driver whilst rounding this corner at something like 70 m.p.h.

seconds or under, while Neubauer stands, stop watch in hand, superintending operations.

The Mercédès timekeeping will be done by Rudi's charming wife, Alice Caracciola, and Geier, who will always be remembered for his sensational crash at Berne in 1935, although there is very little evidence of this to-day, as the German doctors have made a wonderful job of his face.

Now we come to Auto-Union, who

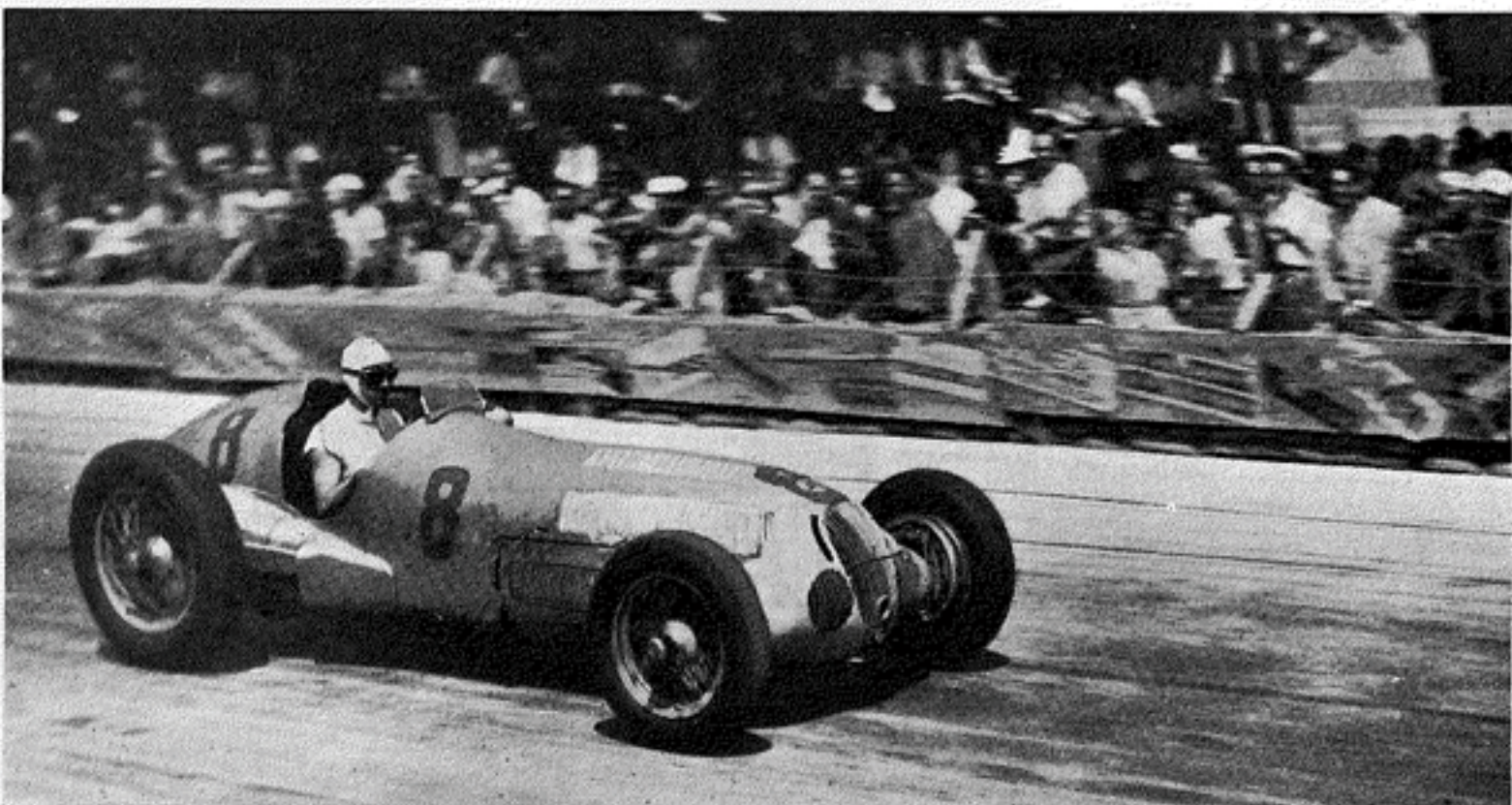
are presided over by Feureisen and Sebastian, who were largely responsible for Auto-Union's success last year. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that Sebastian used to be Caracciola's riding mechanic in the old S.S.K. days.

It is impossible for me to give any accurate idea of how fast Mercédès and Auto-Union will lap Donington, especially as I have not seen the new circuit, but I somehow think that it will be round the 2 minutes 5 seconds

The start of the Donington Grand Prix will be the most exciting and awe-inspiring sight that has ever been seen by any motor racing crowd in this country.

After the cars have been warmed up, Mercédès making a noise like a battery of machine guns, the engines are switched off, hard plugs are then put in, and the radiators are covered over with huge tarpaulins.

Thirty seconds before the fall of the flag, the engines will be started with a deafening roar, which will rise to a



Close-up of R. J. B. Seaman at speed at Pescara

crescendo as the starter drops his flag, and the whole field sweeps forward towards Redgate Corner, with their tyres smoking under the tremendous acceleration. Here the cars will sort themselves out of a seemingly impossible tangle.

There will be a wait of under two minutes, when the leading car will shoot the crest of the hill, down to Starkey's, pursued by a screaming pack of silver projectiles, travelling at over 150 miles per hour.

Von Brauchitsch in the Pits during the Swiss Grand Prix. Note the spare wheel in readiness to go on before the car is even up on the jack or the petrol-filler cap undone



The opening laps will be stupendous, everybody "dicing" for the lead, particularly Rosemeyer, who apart from being a magnificent driver is also willing to take the greatest risks, and will undoubtedly supply plenty of thrills, as he hurls his snaking Auto-Union through the bends in the wood.

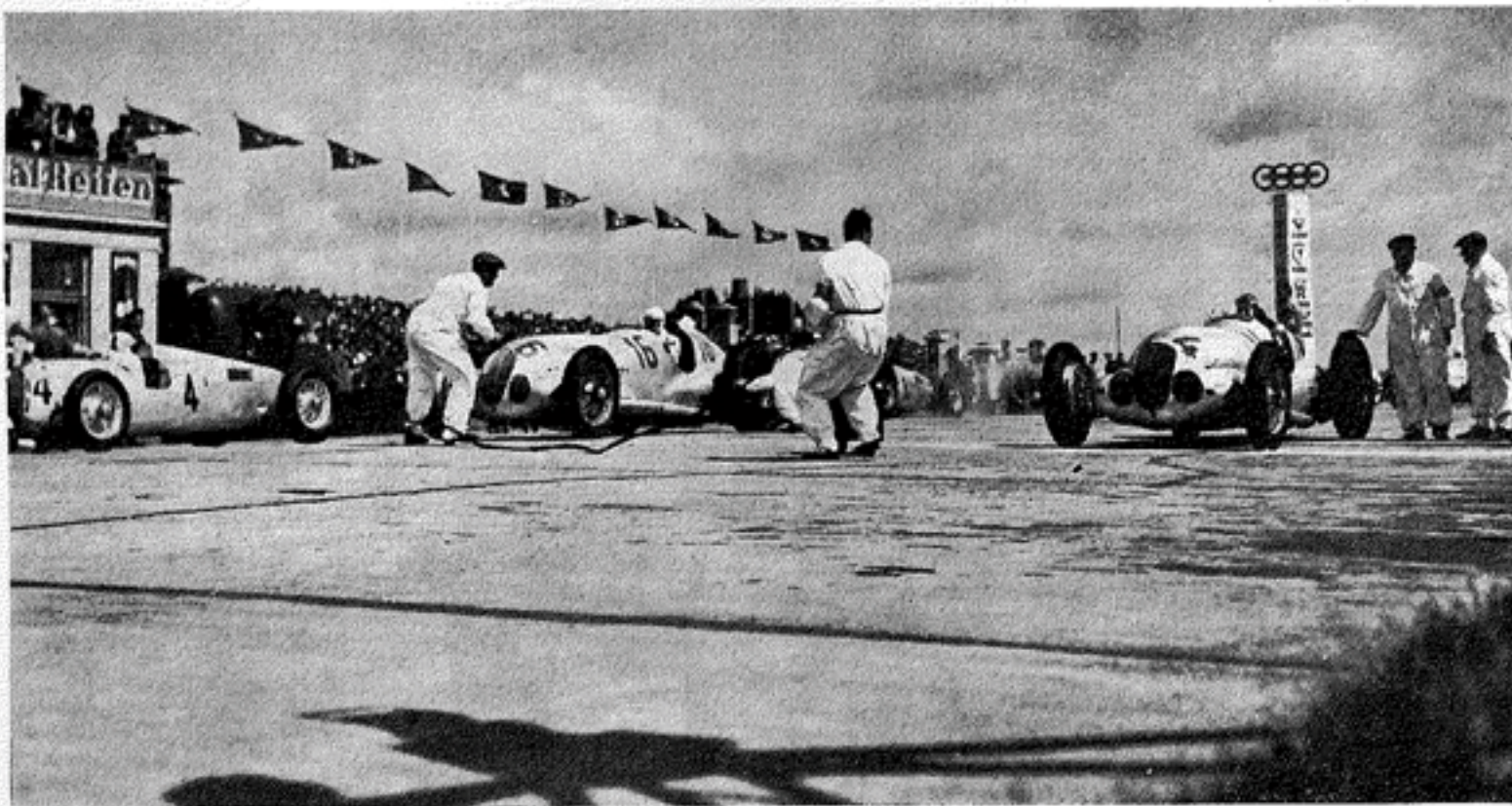
I somehow feel that round a short tricky circuit, such as at Donington, the superior road-holding of this year's Mercedes will be at a premium. Rosemeyer of late seems to have had to wage a lone battle for Auto-Unions,

and as these cars are very tricky and tiring to drive, he has to fight against tremendous odds to keep four Mercedes at bay, especially when one considers the calibre of the Mercedes drivers.

Stuck, although he can be tremendously fast for a few laps, does not seem to be able to keep it up, possibly he is getting too old, and both Hasse and Muller have not had sufficient experience with Auto-Unions to go at the speed necessary to maintain the lead.

I have purposely refrained from making invidious comparisons on the performances of the Alfa-Romeos, E.R.A's and Maseratis, because they will obviously be hopelessly outclassed, and the race lies between the two German teams, Mercedes having the advantage.

All the photographs used to illustrate this article were taken by G. C. Monkhouse on Kodak S.S. Pan. Film.



Scenes of activity on the starting-line at the start of the German Grand Prix