

Petty Takes 200-Lapper At ARE Oval

Dick Rathman Places Second

Lee Petty, of Randleman, N. C., who was given up for dead last February, won the NASCAR sanctioned 200-lap Grand National strictly stock car race yesterday at the Atlantic Rural Exposition track.

Driving a 1953 Dodge V-8, Petty captured the lead with 10 laps remaining and came on to beat the No. 2 man, Dick Rathman, of Daytona Beach, Fla., by a lap on a day in which neither wet nor cold could keep the drivers from the track or a crowd of 5,000 from watching the goings on.

Petty, who won the first Grand National of the year at Daytona Beach last January and then was stricken by an internal ailment which for a time seemed as if it might be fatal, was clocked in one hour, 57 minutes and 28 seconds.

The time was arrived at following a great deal of confusion and a number of hours following the completion of the race.

Spectators Help Dry Track

It took the finish judges until late last night to figure the times and placings, but the confusion was more in keeping with events earlier in the day when it was necessary to ask the spectators to volunteer to help dry off the track so the races might be run.

The finish judges also shuffled the second and third place finishers. At first it had appeared that Buck Baker, of Charlotte, driving a 1953 Oldsmobile 88, had finished second. People left the ARE track figuring the race had gone that way.

Later it developed that Baker had finished a lap behind Rathman, who drove a Hudson Hornet. Fourth place went to Dick Passwater, of Indianapolis, driving a '53 Olds 88, while Bill Blair, of High Point, N. C., and Ray Duhigg, of Greensboro, were fifth and sixth.

Twenty-eight cars started the feature. Only 14 finished. The going was heavy because of spray and mud and after a while it became necessary for drivers to drive with one hand and clean windshields with the other. Eventually, the turns became so lumped with mud that they looked like small mountain ranges.

Thomas Has Wheel Trouble

Petty and Buck Baker exchanged the lead early in the race. Then up came Herb Thomas, of Olivia, N. C., the 1951 Grand National champion and current point leader, to take over first place. But Thomas began having trouble with his right front tire and twice lost the wheel.

Rathman moved ahead at the 140-lap mark and seemed to have the race in hand with Perry a steady second. With 10 laps remaining, Rathman began having trouble with his right front tire and Petty moved up into the lead.

The only Richmond driver to finish was Hal Kent who drove a 1952 Henry J. Buck Mason, of Richmond, was a nonfinisher in a '53 Dodge but he was placed nineteenth.

After that the drivers were told they would have to complete time trials within 30 minutes or else be forced to start the races in the rear. Everyone agreed to this except the Flock brothers—Tim and Fonty, two of the nation's better known stock drivers—and they finally withdrew.