How Ford "Six" Won the Greatest 24 Hour Endurance Contest Ever Run

1,135 Miles
Beating World's Record 312 Miles.

Average 47 7-24 miles per hour, entire distance.

Two "Young Fords"
Also made perfect scores 798 and 728 Miles.

1907
The Ford Team

FRANK KULICK

L. LORIMER

FORD SIX AT A MILE A MINUTE CLIP.
Here is the story of the greatest endurance and speed contest ever achieved by a motor car.

On Thursday afternoon, June 20th, Mr. Ford decided to enter the 24 Hour Endurance Contest which was to begin on the next day (Friday evening at 10 o'clock) on the one-mile race track at the State Fair Grounds, just outside Detroit city limits.

Calling Frank Kulick, head tester of six cylinder cars, he said, "Frank have you a couple of good Sixes handy?"

"Just turned in two," replied Kulick.

"Turn 'em out again—send 'em upstairs and have them stripped." Then calling the other "Frank" Hadas, head tester of runabouts, he said, "Pick out a couple of runabouts and strip them."

This was the characteristic Ford preparation for a stock car race.

The rules under which these 24 hour contests are run were formulated by the American Racing Board, and they provide that "two drivers may alternate," and that "each entrant may nominate two cars of the same make," one to be substituted in the place of the other in case of accident or while the tires are being changed or tanks refilled.

The Ford entry was one stock model, six cylinder touring car and two stock models "R", 15 h. p. runabouts. For each of these there was a substitute, according to the rules above quoted. The substitute Six was stripped, but the two extra runabouts were equipped with regular stock body, lamps, etc.

The Pope-Toledo was represented by two cars, one of which had been advertised as the special Vanderbilt Cup Racing Car, and the other a 1907 stock model.

Thomas was represented by C. A. Coey's special 60 h. p. racer and one 60 h. p. stock model touring car.

Wayne had two stock model 30 h. p. touring cars.

Buick, two stock model 24 h. p. touring cars.

Stevens-Duryea, one 24 h. p. car.

The 24 hour race was scheduled to start at 10 p.m.

Just before the race started Mr. Ford drove around the track a few times with Kulick and decided that, owing to the pitch darkness, through which the arc lights gleamed only to confuse the drivers, and with the wet condition of the track, which had just been sprinkled, high speeds were absolutely unsafe. Also, as the Ford cars were recharged and given the oil pump another push when it became too warm to be comfortable! This was a revelation even to us, and the wonderful cooling qualities of all the Ford "fours" as well as "sixes" was a matter of comment round the course.

In 8 consecutive hours the Ford went 412 miles, an unprecedented average of 51 1/2 miles per hour. This is another record that will not soon be broken on a one mile circular track.

The Thomas had been left behind in the 3rd hour and whenever the Ford overtook the much heralded four cylinder car it seemed as if Coey and his machine were standing still, so quickly was the passage made; and as for the others, they were doing their best to keep up with the two Ford runabouts, No. 6 of which was running 39-33-33-39-39-35-35-34 and 32 miles in successive hours.

Instructions had been given to drive the runabouts at a steady pace of about 30 miles per hour, but the drivers of the "Young Fords" as the spectators called them, became infected with the speed mania, and they also were exceeding the schedule. It would be wonderful, everybody thought, if the runabouts could show 24 hours' endurance at 30 miles per hour, but they had the audacity to go after the world's record and only fell 25 miles short of getting it.

In the 14th hour (11 A.M. to 12 noon Saturday) the Ford Six had regained the 18 miles lead of the Pope-Toledo, passed it, and put one mile to the good. A shout that was almost hysterical went up from the crowd as the wonderful Six sped round the track, and there was despair in the camps of the rivals.

In the next hour the Ford added 5 miles, go-
the drivers, and with the wet condition of the track, which had just been sprinkled, high speeds were absolutely unsafe. Also, as the Ford cars were “green,” Mr. Ford gave orders that not over 40 miles per hour was to be driven in the darkness, or until the cars had thoroughly limbered up.

At that time everyone thought that the car which could maintain a speed of 35 miles per hour would win the race, as the previous world’s record was an average of very little over 33 miles.

Little did they dream what a pace Ford was to set.

The first two hours the “Six” made exactly 40 miles an hour, while Eddie Bald and “Kid McCoy” in the American Roadster, Lytle in Pope-Toledo, C. A. Coey in the Thomas, were driving at what they considered a furious rate for the edification of the grand stand, doubtless expecting to drop down to the usual 30-35 mile an hour grind after the crowd had gone home, as they had been accustomed to do in other similar contests.

In the 3rd hour Kulick mis-calculated, and went 48 miles; dropped down to 45 in the 4th hour. Then he stopped for gasoline and a bite to eat.

It was 2 o’clock A. M. of the longest day of the year. Dawn had begun to break, and the track could now be seen clearly. It had dried and there was little dust flying. Altogether the conditions were ideal when one of Kulick’s pupils, a boy theretofore unknown to fame except among the Ford testers, was put in the seat and Mr. Ford having given the word to “cut the Six loose” began the maddest hour’s run that has ever been witnessed in such a contest.

Whether it was that Lorimer did not realize the speed at which he was driving, and that, with the way he took the turns every lap seemed to on-lookers must be his last; or whether it was that this member of the Ford testing bunch—40 as brilliant driving stars as are known to the automobile industry and any one of whom could well be entrusted to carry the Ford banner to success in any event—realized that here was the opportunity for which he had long been hoping, matters not. Lorimer was a world famous driver before the day closed, and none was quite so proud of his achievement as his tutor, Frank Kulick, with whom those who did not understand contrasted the new star’s splendid work.

At the end of the 4th hour, the Pope-Toledo had 18 miles lead of the Ford car. From the moment the Ford Six was “opened up” it became evident to all that one of three things must happen before the day was done: (1) Either the boy who was driving with such apparent reckless disregard for consequences, would be killed in one of his mad slides around the 

Six sped round the track, and there was despair in the camps of the rivals.

In the next hour the Ford added 5 miles, going 47 to it’s rival’s 42, and it was in the last part of this hour with the Ford six miles ahead, that Lytle, in desperation at being unable to hold the Ford with his big Vanderbilt car, played the last card of the professional racing man.

Early in the game, Lorimer, who had never experienced this stunt, came to the writer and said “that Pope-Toledo man is trying to kill me. He tried to force me off on the lower turn several times.” “How did you get away?” we asked. He replied with a grin, “just opened the throttle and gave him the dust.” Verily! the boy did not realize the danger!

Once too often Lytle tried to trick. This time on Kulick. As Kulick swept wide around the turn, Lytle, who always took the outside of the stretch and cut the corners short, was seen to drive straight for Kulick. Those of us who realized what was about to happen, wondered if Kulick saw—and we wondered what he would do. Would he turn out to avoid a collision with the Pope, go through the fence and over a 20 ft. embankment as other good drivers before him had done? Would he “on brakes” hard and let Lytle go ahead—or would he call the bluff, take the chance of a collision in order to hold his position and let Lytle get out of his own trap as best he might?

Frank called the bluff.

Lytle, realizing the trick had lost, threw the steering wheel over quickly in the effort to avoid a collision which might mean death to both; his right wheel caught and gouged a hole 12 inches deep in the track, a tire exploded like a cannon and the big machine turned a complete summersault, lighting right side up and backing through the inner fence—a twisted and a total wreck.

How Lytle escaped is a mystery. Kulick’s assistant says he half rolled, half crawled along the track escaping the machine only by an inch as it bounded after him.

To make a good “story” the newspaper writers said Lytle ran for another car and continued the drive. In the interests of truth it must be said he did nothing of the kind. The reserve Pope-Toledo, with Loshe at the wheel sped by the wreck before Lytle had left the scene of the disaster, and it was more than two hours before he was again seen at the wheel. Meantime a third driver had been enlisted in the vain effort to catch the Ford.

With only stock models to beat, it became a matter of how many laps Kulick and Lorimer would put on their rivals. 51 to 39; 46 to 39; 49 to 37 were the scores for the next three hours and then a third Pope-Toledo car was brought in. As the sun rose high above the embankment, Mr. Ford having given the word to go, the reserve Pope-Toledo man is brought up to speed, and the race ended.
We knew the moment the Ford Six was "opened up" it became evident to all that one of three things must happen before the day was done: (1) Either the boy who was driving with such apparent reckless disregard for consequences, would be killed in one of his mad slides around the turn; (2) the Ford car would give way under the terrific strain—and those who did not know the Ford construction—lightness, flexibility and strength—thought this must surely happen inside the hour; or (3) the Ford would win.

Miles under the minute became common, and several individual miles were driven in 58 seconds.

The crowd of spectators had gone home and none were left but the rival racing men and the various attendants; before the boy had been driving half an hour everybody forgot his duties and they stood in groups screeching like mad men and cheering the Ford on, regardless of the fact that it was turning rings round their cars. 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 times it lapped the Pope-Toledo in the hour and at the end, 3 A. M., the score card showed the Ford had gone 55 miles to the Pope's 46.

This was a feat never before witnessed save in a 1 or 5 mile race—never dreamed of in a test where the cars must withstand the same terrific strain for 19 hours more, and it was one which in all probability will never be repeated, although it was almost duplicated six hours later with Kulick at the wheel of the "Six."

Those of us at the Ford camp looked at each other in amazement. We had known the Ford Six was a wonderful car and we had known any one of the five we turn out every day could go a mile under the minute on a straight-away road; but that it could go mile after mile and hour after hour at this terrific pace on a circular track, seemed incredible.

When the second hour had almost been completed and Lorimer did not stop, we wondered if he had forgotten his gasoline and oil tanks, and fearing that, in the mad pursuit of fame he might have overlooked these essentials, we signaled him to stop. The only answer was a shake of his head as he sped madly by, hit the turn at a mile a minute clip, seemed to slide half way round it and then go streaking down the back stretch like a thing possessed.

Seemed as if the tires of rubber and fabric could not withstand the terrific impact of the big machine as it hit the curves and its momentum was checked by the side thrust as she turned sharply to take the bend.

Seemed as if the spokes and hubs could not stand up under the bending and straining.

Seemed as if axles—even Ford specially treated steel axles—would be unequal to the stresses to which they were subjected in every mile of this gruelling race.

But faster than one could think the car sped on; one but half heard awe-struck remarks of his neighbors so anxious was he to see that the Ford would win.

With only stock models to beat, it became a matter of how many laps Kulick and Lorimer would put on their rivals. 51 to 39; 48 to 39; 49 to 37 were the scores for the next three hours and then a third Pope-Toledo car was brought into commission. It was contrary to the rules, but when asked we said "by all means; let's win against the hardest competition"—we would not consider it a Ford victory otherwise.

As soon as the Sixes were in the lead Mr. Ford had given the word "put 35 or 40 miles on them before dark, Frank, and then 'play safe'—I don't want any of my boys injured."

At 4 P. M., in the 18th hour, the Ford was 39 miles ahead of the Pope-Toledo, 106 miles ahead of Thomas, and the others had been left to the tender mercies of the "Young Fords."

From that time on, Kulick and Lorimer drove moderately, making 43, 48, 44, 44 and 39 miles in the next 5 hours, allowing the Pope cars to gain a few miles. Mr. Ford's instructions were obeyed to the letter until a half-hour before the race closed. The track was in terrible condition, the night was dark and it was unsafe to drive even at 35 miles an hour, but Kulick, "just to show what was left in the big Six" drove several miles under the minute mark and electrified the audience as much by his own daring as the wonderful staying qualities of the car. One could see him only when he passed the stand and for the rest, six ports belching flame (showing a perfect mixture in the carburetor) the steady roar of the six exhaust—like a giant aeolian harp in a cyclone—as she flew down the back stretch. The roar approached; "No. 1" called the checker—and the six was turning up another mile. Mr. Ford, in the judges' stand was white as a sheet. Time and again he said, "Frank wouldn't drive like that—I hope none of our boys get hurt." Mr. Ford's track experience is perhaps second to that of no other man in the world, but the conditions before him were different to any he had ever encountered before.

Nor was his anxiety entirely for Kulick and the flying Six.

The two runabouts seemed so small in the darkness, so silent, and were so totally obscured by the clouds of dust that, looking back we cannot even yet understand how it was they were not run down by the big cars in their mad contests for the pole and their mile-a-minute brushes past the stand. Signals were useless—the drivers could not see—did not care. We could only wait and listen and—hope.

Early in the day those who did not know Ford cars had predicted "the pace is too hot—it is impossible any car can withstand it for long. The Fords must go to pieces." But at the end of the 24th hour they seemed, and actually were, in better condition than in the first—they had gotten limbered up and were running...
like clocks, without a loose bearing or a lame cylinder. We had used less than half the number of tires our competitors had used—thanks to Ford lightness and flexibility.

And what a marvelous day's work—what a series of records of speed, endurance and regularity!

The Ford Six had made 1135 miles in 24 hours, beating the world's record by 312 miles, and averaging for the entire run 47 7/24 miles per hour.

Fifty-five miles had been crowded into one hour—the fifth.

In the 11th Kulick drove 54 miles.

Kulick drove 20 miles in 20 minutes and 31 seconds, and two miles were "clocked" at 58 seconds each!

Not an explosion missed, not a spark plug changed, magneto never examined, not a part broken, steering gear never wavered and—not a Ford man injured. Our record for never having lost a man in a race was sustained—and so the speed and endurance records we had won were net profit.

For some time it has been the Ford custom to advertise that Ford cars entered in any stock car event will be sold at regular list price as proof of our good "faith—if it is a hill climb the first applicant takes the winning Ford at the top of the hill; and if it is a race, he may drive it from the track if he so desires.

These cars when they finished could have been sold for almost twice their price, but a telegram from New York took one of them, and a Detroit customer who had long been halting between two opinions—a Four or a Six—eagerly snapped up the other.

And what of the "Young Fords"—these saucy runabouts that dared enter such a contest on even terms with the 40's, 50's and 60's of other makes? They are "so light, so flimsy" said those who thought they knew, "surely they do not hope to make a showing." That was during the first few hours. Ten—twelve,—fourteen,—eighteen, twenty, hours later they shared honors with their big brother Sixes and the talk was all of Fords. They ran like sewing machines. They held the pole and, mile after mile, hour after hour, the even rythmic exhaust of the little fellows continued and the miles piled up on the score card. One driver forgot his oil, stayed on the track until his tank was empty and burned out a connecting rod bearing—that was the worst accident of the day. It was No. 10 car and its score shows the miles lost, but we point with pride to this, least of all Ford performances. Light? Yes—never changed a tire during the 24 hours. Flimsy—interpret it "tough as a hickory withe" and you have the proper term. 26 were sold in Detroit next day and 150 more by telegraph—did the "Young Fords" make good?

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**OFFICIAL SCORE, BY HOURS, IN 24 HOUR ENDURANCE CONTEST.**

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(A) FORD 18 Miles behind Pope-Toledo.

(B) Greatest mileage ever made in one hour in long contest—FORD "Six" 55 miles. Gain ing 9 miles in hour.

(C) Kulick drives 54 miles in one hour; 20 miles in 20 minutes, 31 seconds. Single mile in 58 seconds. Gains 5 miles in hour.

(D) FORD passes Pope-Toledo—one mile to the good.

(E) FORD 6 miles ahead—total gain of 24 miles in 11 hours. Lytle jockey Kirk—wrecks his own car.

(F) Third Pope-Toledo appears—FORD 39 miles in the lead. Mr. Ford gives word "play safe."

(G) Kulick drives several miles in the dark under minute mark. FORD SIX wins by 26 miles.

*Wayne driver confused by darkness, drives through fence, wrecking car.

†Did not complete 24 hours being totally disabled by broken crank case. Towed in by a Franklin.