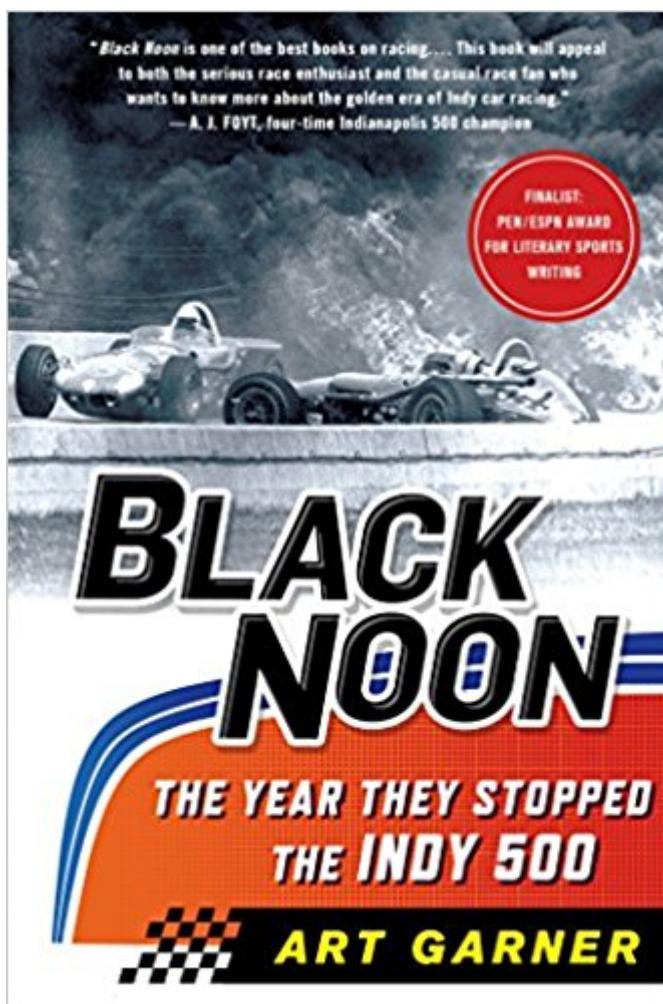


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# Black Noon: The Year They Stopped The Indy 500



## Synopsis

Winner of the 2014 Dean Batchelor Award, Motor Press Guild "Book of the Year" Before noon on May 30th, 1964, the Indy 500 was stopped for the first time in history by an accident. Seven cars had crashed in a fiery wreck, killing two drivers, and threatening the very future of the 500. Black Noon chronicles one of the darkest and most important days in auto-racing history. As rookie Dave MacDonald came out of the fourth turn and onto the front stretch at the end of the second lap, he found his rear-engine car lifted by the turbulence kicked up from two cars he was attempting to pass. With limited steering input, MacDonald lost control of his car and careened off the inside wall of the track, exploding into a huge fireball and sliding back into oncoming traffic. Closing fast was affable fan favorite Eddie Sachs. "The Clown Prince of Racing" hit MacDonald's sliding car broadside, setting off a second explosion that killed Sachs instantly. MacDonald, pulled from the wreckage, died two hours later. After the track was cleared and the race restarted, it was legend A. J. Foyt who raced to a decisive, if hollow, victory. Torn between elation and horror, Foyt, along with others, championed stricter safety regulations, including mandatory pit stops, limiting the amount of fuel a car could carry, and minimum-weight standards. In this tight, fast-paced narrative, Art Garner brings to life the bygone era when drivers lived hard, raced hard, and at times died hard. Drawing from interviews, Garner expertly reconstructs the fateful events and decisions leading up to the sport's blackest day, and the incriminating aftermath that forever altered the sport. Black Noon remembers the race that changed everything and the men that paved the way for the Golden Age of Indy car racing.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Using hundreds of sources, including books, newspaper articles, and personal interviews, Garner re-creates in great detail the awesome spectacle of the Indianapolis 500, one of America's great sporting events, and the tragedy that took two drivers' lives in 1964. That year, the 48th International 500-Mile Sweepstakes showcased advances in engine technologies, chassis design, and tire development as well as offering a huge reward for the winning company. Garner profiles the men who drove the cars and contrasts some lighthearted moments before the race with the tragedy on the track. Especially poignant are the moments after the crash, as everyone from drivers to family members watching on television wondered who was trapped within the billowing smoke. Although the book's pace is slowed at times by Garner's attempt to include every detail related to the race, from practice runs in May through A. J. Foyt's bittersweet victory, this is a fitting tribute to the men who helped transform racing, sometimes with their lives, 50 years ago. --Craig Clark --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“The heart and soul of Black Noon is Garner's insightful and sensitive weaving of racing life and American life in the early '60s. Garner's intrepid research and in-depth interviews with those who lived that day of destiny gave him the tools needed to bring a moment in time vividly alive a half century later. Black Noon gives life to the pure and original spirit of the sport and reminds us what Indy car racing represents when it is truly worth risking everything for. Art Garner's Black Noon is a thoughtful and truthful story of his [Dave MacDonald] and Eddie Sachs' final race and that it could be the most important motor racing book of 2014.”

Racer Magazine “Garner writes a lot about that fateful May day in Indiana, and the days before and after it. The book offers a good education, particular for the casual fan. Black Noon happened a long time ago, but Garner is correct in saying that this is a story worth telling. It was an important day in auto racing history, and deserves the good treatment that this book provides. Four stars.”

Buffalo News / All Sports Book Reviews “A very well written and informative book. This book is highly recommended to both the casual racing and the hard-core motorsport historian types. This book transfers you back to May of 1964, a time many of us would like to go back to, however perhaps shortening the month by two days.”

Racing Nation “Coming up on the 50th anniversary of one of the most tragic days in Indianapolis 500 history, when Eddie Sachs and Dave MacDonald were killed in a fiery crash in 1964, first-time author Garner recounts the tragic accident and the events leading up to and following the race. An avid race fan and former automobile public relations executive, Garner

covers almost every aspect of the race from the drivers and their cars to the emergence of the "funny cars," the competing tire brands, and the ongoing controversial ethanol debate. While machines dominate much of the work, Garner is careful to not forget legends like A.J. Foyt and Bobby Unser, and his descriptions of the carefree Sachs and reticent MacDonald keeps the work focused. A great way for motor sports fans to learn about how their favorite sport's dark past influenced its bright future, this work proves Garner is off to a fast start as a racing writer. *Publishers Weekly* "A good story, and an important one, *Black Noon* is highly recommended." *The Hamilton Spectator* "Using hundreds of sources, including books, newspaper articles, and personal interviews, Garner re-creates in great detail the awesome spectacle of the Indianapolis 500, one of America's great sporting events, and the tragedy that took two drivers' lives in 1964" a fitting tribute to the men who helped transform racing, sometimes with their lives, 50 years ago. *Booklist* "Black Noon captures the era when I first started racing at Indianapolis and brought back a lot of memories--good and bad--that I had long forgotten. It was a hard time to be a race driver; we figured there was a 50/50 chance of being killed in a race car. And unfortunately that was acceptable. That is truly the scary part. The accident that stopped the '64 race and killed Eddie Sachs and Dave MacDonald was absolutely terrible--possibly the worst I ever saw. But it also forced our sport to change and put a new emphasis on safety. We all thank God for Bill Simpson and Goodyear Tire Co, as they were the leaders in safety for that day. This is one of the best racing books I've read and covers an important part of our history that often goes overlooked. I'd recommend it for everyone from the racing historian to the casual sports fan." *Bobby Unser*, three-time Indianapolis 500 champion "Calling itself the greatest spectacle in racing, the Indianapolis 500 for more than 100 years has generated interest that rivals the Kentucky Derby and the Super Bowl as a single day sporting event. On this stage in 1964, tragedy struck on what would be the race's darkest day. Art Garner has written the definitive account of the accident that halted the race and took the lives of two racers, cagey veteran Eddie Sachs and rising star Dave MacDonald. With interviews of such legends as A.J. Foyt, Dan Gurney, Parnelli Jones and Bobby Unser, Garner weaves a compelling and intriguing tale of the events leading up to the race, the cause of the accident and the aftermath that forever changed the Indy 500." *Matt DeLorenzo*, former editor-in-chief, *Road & Track Magazine*; former editor, *AutoWeek Magazine* "Much has been written about the 1964 Indianapolis 500 and the horrific crash that claimed the lives of American racers Eddie Sachs and Dave MacDonald. But not until recently have race historians and internet bloggers uncovered a clearer picture of what really happened. Art Garner has written what is not only the most

well-researched, comprehensive and accurate account of that day, he has boiled down years of research and hundreds of hours of in-depth interviews into what is Â“beyond a doubt the definitive book on the people, the cars, and the forces that came together in that fateful race.Â• Â“*The Family of Dave MacDonald*Â“Black Noon is one of the best books on racing that I've come across. It's packed full of interesting stories about all of us who competed in the '64 Indy 500, giving readers new insight into how that tragic day unfolded. That victory was one of the greatest and definitely the saddest of my career. Art Garner captures not just that day but that whole era through his perceptive reporting. I think this book will appeal to both the serious race enthusiast and the casual race fan who wants to know more about the golden era of Indy car racing.Â• Â“*A.J. Foyt, International Motorsports Hall of Fame inductee and winner of the 1964 Indianapolis 500*Â“The 1964 Indy 500 is a part of racing history that needs to be preserved for the future and Black Noon does it! It provides plenty of funny and teary remembrances of the drivers, owners, crew members and track personnel from that terrible day.Â• Â“*Eddie Sachs Jr.*

It is easy to forget just how old the sport of auto racing actually is. The accident chronicled here occurred in 1964, over fifty years ago, and yet drivers and spectators were dying at the Indianapolis race track as early as 1909. Drivers continue to die to this day in Indy racing and in all other varieties of motor sports. In one respect this work is a tale of the remarkable tolerance for death and agony shared by drivers, owners, promoters and the general fan base that continues to this day. This year (2015) witnessed the death of Justin Wilson in an Indy Race at Pocono (PA), a driver struck in the head by the wreckage of another car. Efforts to install protective driver casing on the cars in response to this present day fatality has met with considerable opposition from those who wish to preserve the traditional ways of the sport. The metaphor of Â“the perfect stormÂ• for multiple crises reaching a boiling point is probably ready for retirement. And yet author Art Garner (2014) makes a strong case that the circumstances of this particular race did indeed mark a watershed of sorts where speed, design, and a devil may care approach on the track came under a grudging closer scrutiny from all quarters. My own impression is that the crash of 1964 caused the racing community to at least come to immediate grips with one of its most feared factors, fire. I went back through YouTube and looked at the surprisingly large library of clips of the actual accident and explosion. Visually this is easily one of the most frightening and intimidating sporting accidents ever recorded, even to the present day. It is amazing that only two drivers, Eddie Sachs and Dave MacDonald, were actually killed in the incident. The number of

dangerous variables in play in 1964 is probably unprecedented in racing. For those watching the race in real time, one of the immediate visuals from the starting grid was the difference between the cars themselves. (Although the 500 was not yet televised on commercial television to American home audiences in 1964, the race was available for viewing in theaters across the country as well as via newsreels from multiple media outlets and of course the several hundred thousand in attendance that Memorial Day weekend.) The early 1960s saw a move from the long front-engine American cars (roadsters, or more technically the Offenhauser package) to the European rear engine cars (Lotus design), much closer to today's Indy racing template. The Lotus proved to be a faster car, on the whole, but multiple factors including national pride led United States designers and mechanics to stick with the Offies longer than they probably should have. To keep the Offenhauser competitive, a number of innovations were introduced to maintain the front engine roadsters' viability, but none proved to be as controversial as fuel. To overcome the speed and power of the Lotus design, many Offie teams designed the older models to carry more fuel by increasing capacity and reducing the weight of the metal frame of the car around the driver. Astonishingly, many teams went into the race on a one pit-stop strategy, that is, one fuel stop around mile 250. (Today's race would typically see between five and eight stops.) This strategy in practice meant that a number of drivers were literally surrounded with fuel, in vehicles with reduced armor to protect them and their gas tanks. Add to this the use of multiple fuels: standard gasoline which burns visibly with high explosive characteristics, and an alcohol fuel that burns invisibly. Drivers in 1964 would be killed and injured with both types. Three different tire manufacturers provided equipment for the 1964 race as well. To crown a dangerous situation was a disturbing lack of oversight. A young Humpy Wheeler, then a tire representative to both Indy car and NASCAR Racing, marveled at the secrecy and lack of official supervision at Indy. He knew from experience that NASCAR garages were open, that mechanics policed each other where safety and competitive edges were involved (though NASCAR was still reeling from a 1963 racing inferno and the death of one of its own biggest stars, a fan favorite nicknamed, ironically, "Fireball." Garner does his best to provide enough overview of the racing environment within his compelling format of a daily countdown through May 1964. He provides a good sketch of the race's two fatalities. Eddie Sachs was a good if not great veteran competitor who enjoyed a laugh and a fan following. He had promised his wife he would soon retire. Dave McDonald, by contrast, was a handsome and promising driver from the West Coast in his first 500. He lined up along with the U.S. favorites A.J.

Foyt and Parnelli Jones and the British invasion of Jim Clark and Jack Brabham, among the 33 starters. McDonald lost control of his car on lap two, a point at which all cars were brimming with fuel. He hit the inside wall and then caromed back onto the track into a pack of drivers including Sachs and Johnny Rutherford. Foyt, competing on the opposite side of the speedway, beheld what he initially thought was an atomic blast. A track official recalls thinking that auto racing, as a sport, had ended before his eyes. (In fact, the race resumed two hours later.) Sachs was killed in his car. Rutherford, himself injured, was placed in the care center next to McDonald and left a graphic description of death by lung incineration. Garner chronicles the national reaction, within the limits of his texts. The author has provided an excellent 165-source bibliography for further elaboration on many facets of the race and its very gradual impact upon safety considerations, some still under debate as of this writing in 2015.

What Art Garner accomplished here is amazing. Using the tragic events that led to the deaths of Eddie Sachs and Dave MacDonald in the 1964 Indy 500 edition, the writer sets the stage for explaining the end of the front-engine era (roadsters), replaced by rear-engine cars ("funny cars"); the insanely dangerous conditions of that time; the top drivers at the time; a brief history of the Indianapolis race track and its traditions, etc. He interviewed dozens of people directly for this book. And, most surprisingly, he managed to find the right balance between giving technical information that is enough for those in the knowing of this subject, and that will not put away the casual reader. A blast of a book!! Note: how great that Jimmy Clark really was!!! The author gets it right and rightly praises the genius Scottman.

Excellent and riveting. Thanks for helping a boy who was 10 at the time and only remembers seeing that huge cloud of smoke dwarfing the Indianapolis Speedway on the nightly news and hearing about the deaths of two racers who he was unfamiliar with. Now I feel that I know the men and their families a bit. I understand their lives a little more. I respect them and appreciate them. I feel a bit of the pain and loss that their loved ones must have felt. I understand that there is not just one single thing that caused this tragedy, but a combination of events that played out in precisely the right order. I have a respect for the drivers who raced along side them. These are people who raced because they loved it regardless of the outcome. They did not die in vain. They helped advance the safety of drivers on and off the race track. It was a high cost to them and their families, but the world should be grateful to men like these for the eyes they opened and the minds they inspired.

Art really knows his Indy 500. This book is a great read and fills in all the blanks. Complete historical details provided throughout. Fantastic photos. While the main story is about one tragic day in particular, it's also a testament to all those drivers who've risked life and limb for the coveted checkered flag in the "Greatest Spectacle In Racing". A perfect gift for the Indy 500 fan or anyone who enjoys reading about auto racing and history.

I know Eddie Sachs' son, Eddie Jr. (although he really is Edward Sachs III. When I lettered his race cars, he did have me put Eddie Sachs III over the door), and had met Nance when Eddie Jr. started racing. There isn't anything in this book that deviated from whatever I learned about the Sachs' side of this drama. Eddie and Nance were a perfect match for each other. If Eddie was "the Clown Prince of Auto Racing", then Nance was the "Princess". I got the impression from her she could match wits with Eddie at anytime, or anyplace, so if you've ever met their son you can understand where he gets his sense of humor. Another thing I really liked about the book is, the attention to detail that Dave MacDonald received. Too often, Dave, because of Eddie's fame, gets overlooked in this story.

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