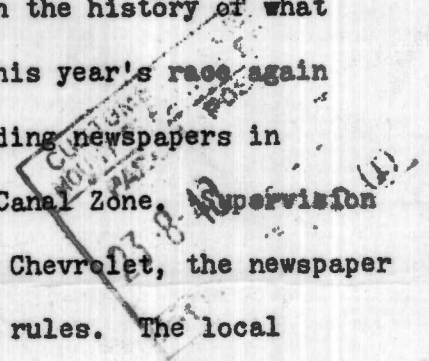
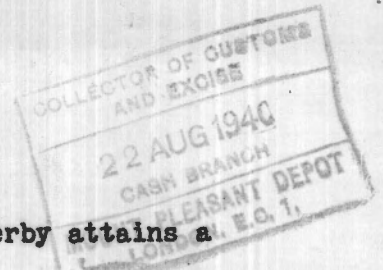


## Facts about the All-American Soap Box Derby

In its seventh consecutive year, the All-American Soap Box Derby attains a new high mark, with the largest entry list--132 champions--in the history of what has grown to be the top sports event for boys in America. This year's race again is sponsored jointly by the Chevrolet Motor Division and leading newspapers in cities throughout the United States, Canada, and the Panama Canal Zone. Supervision over the broad general program of the Derby is maintained by Chevrolet, the newspaper at each sponsor point conducting its own race under national rules. The local champion then is sent by the newspaper to Akron, O., where at Derby Downs, specially-constructed Derby race course, he competes in the national and international finals, co-sponsored by Chevrolet and the Akron Beacon-Journal.

The Derby is a coaster wagon race for boys age 11 to 15 years, inclusive. The racers are gravity-powered cars, boy-built throughout. Weight and dimension restrictions are set by rule, and certain types of wheels and brakes are likewise specified, the main purposes of these restrictions being to assure safety for drivers and onlookers and to place all boys on an equal footing, regardless of family circumstances. No car may cost more than \$10 to build, and no adult may assist in its construction, except by advising the youngster who is constructing his own car. Professionally-built cars, and those involving welding, metal-lathe work, or other processes beyond the average boy's capacities, are disqualified.



Origin of the Soap Box Derby

A Dayton (O.) newspaper photographer is the originator of the Soap Box Derby idea. Early in 1933, while on an assignment for his paper, Myron E. Scott came across a group of small boys scooting down a Dayton hill in home-made miniature cars. In the "roving cameraman" tradition, Scott snapped a few shots of the boys racing, and on his way back to the office found his imagination fired by the lads' enthusiasm. He reported the incident so graphically to his managing editor that the latter agreed to sponsor a "soap box" race for the boys of Dayton, who thus became the "pioneers" of the All-American Soap Box Derby.

Under Scott's direction, the first Soap Box Derby was run off several weeks later as a promotion of the Dayton Daily News. The interest aroused by the race in Dayton and nearby cities, and the popularity of the contest with boys and their parents as well, convinced Scott of the feasibility of expanding it into a national event. He thought at once of Chevrolet as a national sponsor, and gained immediate approval.

Scott and Chevrolet went to work early in 1934, enlisting the cooperation of leading newspapers throughout the United States in a country-wide Soap Box Derby for that summer. There was enthusiastic response. Some thirty-four papers undertook to sponsor races in their cities, and in August the national finals were held at Dayton. Huge crowds turned out to watch the local races as well as the Dayton finals, confirming Scott's belief that he had hit on a "natural". Robert Turner of Muncie, Indiana carried off All-American first place.

In 1935, the Derby's second year, there were 52 participating cities. It was estimated that more than 50,000 boys took part in the local races, held during June and July. The crowd which lined Tallmadge

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CASH BRANCH  
MOUNT PLEASANT DEPOT  
LONDON E.C. 1.

Hill in Akron to see Maurice E. Bale of Anderson, Indiana, flash across the finish line as All-American victor, was well in excess of those at the finals the preceding year.

Nineteen thirty-six saw inauguration of the International Soap Box Derby in conjunction with the All-American race. A Derby had been held in South Africa during the month of January, and the South African champion and his entry made the long trip to Akron for the international event. There were 116 cities in the 1936 race, more than 100,000 boys entering.

The year was especially notable, in Soap Box Derby annals, by reason of the fact that the finals were held on the new, specially-constructed "Derby Downs," an 1100-foot concrete hill designed and built with the requirements of this race in mind. In the stands and on the banks of the cut adjoining this course, throngs estimated by Akron police at more than 100,000 gathered to watch the race. Herbert E. Muench of St. Louis won the All-American and International finals and became the Soap Box Derby hero of that year.

In preparation for the 1937 race--won by Robert Ballard of White Plains, N. Y.--and the 1938 race--won by Robert Berger of Omaha, Neb.--numerous improvements were made in the Derby course at Akron. Stand capacity was enlarged, press accommodations were improved, and a double-decked steel bridge for judges, officials, radio announcers and commentators, and up-to-date photo-finish and electric timing equipment, was erected at the finish line. These improvements were augmented, in 1939, by several others, including a pedestrian tunnel under the track. First prize in 1939 was won by Clifford Hardesty of White Plains, N. Y.

Local races throughout the 1940 sponsor city list were run off in June and July, preliminary to the finals. One hundred thirty youngsters from the United States, one from Canada and one from Panama, have qualified as local

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champions, clinching the right to come to Akron.

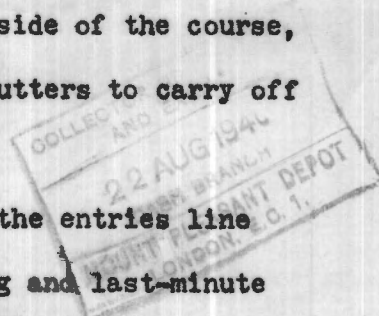
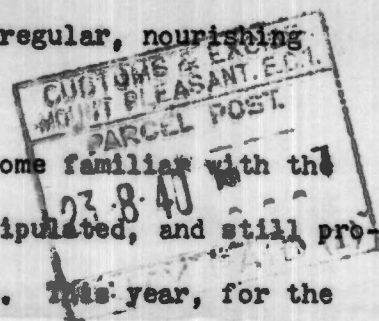
Civic, educational and industrial leaders of Akron are working with Chevrolet to make this year's event the greatest in Derby history. Last year's crowd of 125,000 should be exceeded, race officials believe. The Mayflower Hotel has been reserved, from lobby to roof, to accommodate the champions, their newspaper men escorts, the many parents who will make the journey, and the officials required to handle the program.

The boys will arrive in Akron by rail, bus, air, and private automobile, and they will find the city theirs for a period of three full days. The entire time will be scheduled in advance, in a way which will assure them of regular, nourishing meals, ample rest, and plenty of excitement and fun.

Prior to 1937, the champions had no opportunity to become familiar with the Derby course in advance of the actual race, for the rules stipulated, and still provide, that no city champion may compete two successive years. This year, for the fourth time, each boy will make a trial run down the long hill on Saturday, to get the "feel" of the course. This plan has been found to allay the youngsters' natural nervousness on the day of the all-important race.

The hill is worth detailed description, for it is the only one of its kind anywhere. It is of concrete, laid 30 feet wide, entirely without crown, and measures a fifth of a mile between the start and the finish lines. From its steepest grade --16 per cent near the top--it levels out gently toward the bottom. (Top speed attained by the racers is about 30 miles an hour.) Joints between the concrete slabs are ground smooth to eliminate bumps. Sturdy planks line either side of the course, at hub-height, to keep all cars within bounds. There are ample gutters to carry off a cloudburst, if necessary.

At the top of the course is a large, level paved area where the entries line up, under a huge tent, for their heats. Service pits for greasing and last-minute adjustments adjoin this area. At the starting line, a heavy shaft with a baffle at



the head of each car lane is countersunk in the pavement, from one side of the course to the other. Cars are lined up for each heat with their noses against the baffles. At the starting signal, the shaft is given a quarter-turn forward, by means of a lever at the track-edge. The lever is actuated by an adaptation of the power cylinder used on the Chevrolet vacuum gearshift. It causes the baffles to drop simultaneously, so that the entries flash away to an absolutely even start. And at the same instant, the electric timing device is set in motion. It is automatically stopped as the leading car touches the finish line.

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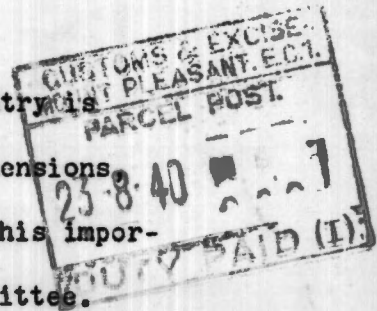
There are grandstand and bleacher seats this year to accommodate approximately 410,000 persons, and standing room along the course for several times that many more. Hundreds of acres of parking space are available on the Akron Airport, adjacent. Police and Ohio State Police have worked out special routes to speed traffic movement between the city and the course, and to facilitate entry and egress for cars from other cities. They handled this work so efficiently last year as to earn many compliments. Rarely has so huge a crowd been moved with so little delay.

Press stands, with 50 typewriters and 15 press wires, will be ready for the correspondents and various wire services. Ted Husing and other top-flight sports commentators for two major networks will be housed at a vantage point on the bridge.

The prizes at stake in the finals are headed by a \$2,000 college scholarship. There are numerous other awards, both for the runners-up and for the winners in several different classifications. Prime among these is a 1940 Chevrolet Special De Luxe auto for second place, and two official Soap Box Derby miniature motor cars for third and fourth. And so that no one will feel "left out," when the prizes are distributed at the huge Derby banquet after the race, there is a handsome wrist-watch for every champion, no matter where he finished at Akron.

COLLECTOR  
AND SALES  
22 AUG 1946  
CORN BRANCH  
FRONT PLEASANT DEPOT  
LONDON, E.C. 1.

In the interests both of fairness and of safety, every entry is rigidly inspected before the race, with respect to weight, dimensions, workmanship and design. Ever since the Derby was organized, this important check has been carried out by an impartial Technical Committee.



In addition to this body, two other groups work closely with Chevrolet and the co-sponsoring newspapers in determining policies and rules governing the Derby. On the National Contest Board as chairman is Franklin Reck, managing editor, The American Boy. Serving with him are Irving Crump, editor, Boys' Life; Julian Leggett, assistant managing editor, Popular Mechanics; Chris Sinsabaugh, editor, Automotive News, and Arthur Wakeling, home workshop editor, Popular Science.

This year, the National Finals Technical Committee is composed of J. W. Schlemmer, chairman, sports editor, Akron Beacon-Journal; B. E. Fulton, airport manager, Akron; Horace Jellison, vocational director, Akron public schools; E. O. Stallsmith, Hower Vocational High School, Akron; N. H. Keeling, Akron; M. E. Scott, Dayton Daily News, Dayton, O., and Reck.

Scott also serves as chairman of the National Newspaper Advisory Committee, a group of newsmen from all sections of the country who have had wide experience in conducting local races, as well as with the national event. With him are F. E. Bennett, Ft. Wayne News-Sentinel; Dudley Brown, Seattle Times; Leo J. Fox, Cleveland News; T. H. Groehn, Detroit News; Ray Haynes, Benton Harbor News-Palladium; J. H. Kennedy, Buffalo Courier-Express; Ray Kuhn, Bay City Times; Hal F. Lindley, Los Angeles News; R. L. Martin, Flint Journal; Phil J. O'Toole, Portland Oregonian; Leon Pinkson, San Francisco Chronicle; J. W. Schlemmer, Akron Beacon-Journal; Harold B. Smith, Wichita Beacon; H. M. Van Devender, Atlanta Constitution, and Paul Waitt, Boston Herald-Traveler.

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# DETROIT BOY WINS ASK 'SOAP BOX' DERBY IN T

## Thomas Fisher Then Goes On Educa to Capture International Race The in Annual Program

AKRON, Ohio, Aug. 11 (AP)—  
Thomas Fisher of Detroit won the  
seventh annual All-American "Soap  
Box" Derby today before 50,000  
spectators. Aided by a slight tail  
wind, young Fisher's gravity racer  
flashed over the 1,031-foot course in  
26.68 seconds.

Robert Londeree of Charleston,  
W. Va., finished second and George  
Smith of Akron was third.

The Detroit lad went on to win  
the international championship  
event by defeating Teddy Stewart  
of Colon, Panama, Canal Zone, and  
Donald McGowan of Belleville,  
Ont., Canada. Fisher covered the  
course in 26.84 seconds. Stewart  
was second and McGowan third.

In the All-American derby Fisher's trim racer barely nosed out final-heat rivals to win him a college education and establish a new record for the nation-wide event, sponsored by the Chevrolet Motor Division of General Motors Corporation. The course was shortened by 175 feet to reduce driving hazards for the miniature vehicles.

Fisher drove his ultra-streamlined little racer to victory through five grueling contests that saw 129 other derby hopefuls fall by the wayside.

Aside from trophies, Londeree and Smith will take home with them, respectively, a de luxe automobile (Chevrolet) and a midget motor car.

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