

Nuts for Racing?

As nutty as it sounds, peanuts are not welcome at many racing events, unless they've already been removed from their shells. If you're going to a race, you can bring a bag of salted, dry-roasted or honey-roasted shelled peanuts, a jar of peanut butter or a Baby Ruth candy bar. All of that's fine. But if you bring a bag of peanuts that are still in their shells, you just might be cursing your favorite driver and perhaps even putting spectators at risk.

You probably won't find peanuts in shells for sale anywhere within a stadium on race day. If you bring your personal stash down to the pits, you're going to make some enemies. It's no joke. Plenty of prominent drivers, including Dale Earnhardt Sr., reportedly believe this superstition.

Why? Well, it's a legend, of course.

Professional race car drivers are among the most superstitious of all athletes, and there have been enough peanut-related incidents in the sport's sordid history to earn this otherwise innocuous snack a reputation as an unlucky charm. In fact, there are two fatal race-day crashes that shoulder most of the blame, both of which occurred in 1937.

The first involved two racers that went off the road at Langhorne Speedway in Pennsylvania. When both cars came to a stop in the spectator area, there were peanut shells near the wreck (and everywhere, really) because peanuts were a popular snack at such events. The drivers in the Langhorne incident were both fine, but several spectators were injured or killed. That same summer, in Nashville, an on-track pileup caused the death of one driver, and again, the peanut shells that dotted the landscape were interpreted as a bad omen. However, there's a newspaper article from 1933 that mentions (but does not explain) the peanut superstition, so it's possible the role of peanut shells in the 1937 crashes were blown out of proportion.

Now, peanut shells are viewed with suspicion at any racing event, even though peanuts in their shells were as common then as beer and hot dogs are today. In other words, race car drivers are so superstitious that they won't go anywhere near a peanut shell on a race day, even though the mere presence of a peanut shell at the scene of a crash is about as meaningful as corn dog sticks or discarded beer cans.

Ignition Parts for Classic Era Cars

"I see by the Sears Roebuck catalogue that it is still possible to buy an axle for a 1909 Model T Ford, but I am not deceived.

The great days have faded, the end is in sight"

From "Farewell To Model T" by Lee Strout White written in 1936 only 11 years after Model T production ended.

It is remarkable that, in 2015 — 80 years after my 1935 Airflow Chrysler Imperial was built — some replacement parts for it are still in production, albeit these electrical and brake parts, roller bearings and seals etc. were used on other cars, as well as industrial, marine and farm equipment well after 1935. Nevertheless in the collector car case today "...the end is in sight."

It's been some years since Sorensen, Filko, and other minor suppliers of aftermarket ignition parts departed the scene. Then some years ago Autolite/Prestolite and Delco Remy, OEM suppliers that also served the aftermarket, discontinued their offerings. More recently Standard Motor Products (SMP) which supplied this market under the "Standard" and premium "Blue Streak" brands acquired the Borg Warner ignition parts line as well as Niehoff and Echlin (the supplier to NAPA). SMP changed the "Borg Warner" brand to "BWD," and after awhile discontinued the "Niehoff" brand and products. Today SMP continues to provide the "Standard," "BWD" and "Echlin" product lines to the market place through different retail chains and independent outlets. These items appear in many cases to be identical, but in others, specifically contact sets, there are differences. SMP is slowly curtailing the "Blue Streak" line, however under the "Standard" brand some ignition contact sets are still the superior "Blue Streak" design with its unique felt cam-oiling wiper. (This writer believes that the NAPA Echlin points, if not as good as the Blue Streak points, are still superior to the BWD and ordinary "Standard" points.)

A very recent action I have noted in the SMP outfit is a new identical online catalog format for "Standard" and "BWD" parts. In both cases Airflow cars are no longer in the search system. NADA (Echlin) has its own online catalog which encompasses all NAPA's products and still brings up the Airflows in the search function at this time, but it seems to miss some items. NAPA also sells their parts on line. In some cases, particularly condensers there are two part numbers including an economy brand. Most of these vendors give 3-year, 36,000 mile warranties, but the lower priced items have only a one-year, 12,000 mile warranty and this writer thinks it is foolish to buy the cheaper option even if it may be identical except for the box. In other cases a heavy duty option is offered such as Echlin points and rotors for Autolite distributors.

Wells is an old independent company that was once a strictly OEM supplier (I believe). It claims that all its parts are OEM quality level. In addition to the "Wells" brand, they supply these parts to AutoZone under the "Duralast" private label.

All of these suppliers have interchange look-up in their websites so if you have an OEM (i. e. Delco Remy, Ford etc.) or a competitor's aftermarket number you can find a part that way. Old Autolite and Mopar numbers and probably others are exceptions.

Bill Deibel 11-10-15

