

★ **Faster: How a Jewish Driver, an American Heiress, and a Legendary Car Beat Hitler's Best**

**Neal Bascomb**

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In his new book *Faster*, Neal Bascomb retraces the story of an underdog racing team.

Made up of a driver banned from all the top European teams because of his Jewish heritage; an ambitious American heiress who wanted to make her mark in a sport that was dominated by men; and a car company on its last leg, Écurie Bleue took on Hitler's best teams and cars to win a symbolic victory just as Hitler amped up his war of terror.

The book begins with a brief history of auto racing, casting it as a gentleman's sport that pit the best drivers against each other, though after the races, the same drivers would meet at the bar for drinks and revelry. As the sport shifted, it cast nation against nation, and by the late 1930s, Grand Prix racing was no longer a gentleman's sport: it was a sport on which national pride hung.

During this golden age of auto racing, Hitler decided to use Germany's racing teams as a propaganda tool. By winning the Grand Prix, he believed he would show the world the superiority of all things German. He threw the weight of the German government behind the Mercedes and Auto Union car companies; Germany soon became the dominant force in Grand Prix racing.

At the 1938 Pau Grand Prix, though, Renè Dreyfus struck a blow against German national pride. His win against all odds was seen as a victory for those oppressed by Hitler: the "Pau might not change the tides of nations, but it could spark hope in a world darkening at every turn."

In this beautifully told book, each page adds to the last, right up to the climactic last chapter. *Faster* captures, in detail, the glory days of early racing and the drivers who faced down their dangers.

ERIC PATTERSON (March / April 2020)

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