



*Royal Lancer*



Buick Special, Oldsmobile Super 88, Pontiac Star Chief, Hudson Wasp, and Nash Statesman.

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway announced in January 1954 that a Dodge Royal "500" convertible would pace the 38th annual Indianapolis 500. As speedway president Wilbur Shaw explained, "The 1954 Dodge V-8 is the logical choice to pace this year's Indianapolis race, in view of the record-breaking performance it registered in American Automobile Association stock-car tests last September on Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats.

"In addition to chalking up an unprecedented total of 196 new AAA stock-car records, the 1954 Dodge V-8 became the fastest standard production car ever clocked by AAA's contest board. The 1954 Dodge V-8 was timed going over the Salt Flats at 108.36 miles per hour."

Dodge President William C. Newberg drove the pace lap; Bill Vukovich Sr. won the race for the second year in a row. "Vuky" received as prizes: kisses from wife Esther and actress Marie Wilson, \$74,934.84, the Borg-Warner Trophy, and the Dodge Royal "500" pace car—the last

of which he traded in for a new DeSoto.

Buyers gave the 1954 Dodge an equally cool reception. Production plummeted from 320,008 Dodges built for model year 1953, to 154,649 for 1954. The Royal accounted for 64,803 of the '54s. But "Flair Fashion" styling and the Champagne Music of Lawrence Welk would put the sparkle back into Dodge sales in 1955.

Since 1951, Welk and his orchestra had played televised dance music from the Aragon Ballroom on Lick Pier in Ocean Park, California. Station KTLA out of Los Angeles carried the show live on Friday

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