

# Publius Aelius Gutta Calpurnianus, Agitator Romanus

DAVID MATZ

Saint Bonaventure University

Without question, our most important primary sources on Roman chariot racing is epigraphical in nature. Many inscriptions are extant, ranging in length and content from a few short lines to long encomia on the brave deeds of the noblest charioteers. The tripartite inscription (*CIL* 6.10047 a, b, c) on the career of Publius Aelius Gutta Calpurnianus, driver for the Red, Blues, Greens and Whites, falls somewhere between those two extremes. It is a document whose readily understandable terms and descriptions are supplemented by several puzzling passages. The purposes of the present endeavor are to: comment upon the salient points of the inscription, and offer some interpretations of the more cryptic sections of the text.

Calpurnianus appears to have been a very successful charioteer indeed. To have won over 1,000 races and to have earned the big prizes (30,000, 40,000 and 50,000 sesterces) 47 times, as he did, must have required a great deal of skill. Equally noteworthy was the fact that Calpurnianus survived to dedicate his own monument, presumably at the end of a long career.

Although the general outlines of Calpurnianus' career are clear enough, several problems do remain. These include: the length of his career; the number of races in which he participated; the date of the inscription; the distribution of his 1.127 victories among the four factions. Each of these topics will receive attention and commentary. There will also be a consideration of the curious phrase *pedibus ad quadrigam LXI* (tr. "on foot toward the chariot 61"). Three influential sport historians (Friedlaender, Harris and Balsdon) will have different notions on the meaning of that term. After reviewing their hypotheses, the author will offer his own interpretation.