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If you want to be the best, you have to beat the best. Welcome to the Racing Capital of the World[®], where the fiercest competitors in open-wheel racing square off on the biggest stage on the planet. Come for the competition, the celebration, or a healthy dose of both. There's only one place to experience an epic thrill like this.

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TUNE IN AT 11AM EST

THE CHAMP

BRINGING THE A-GAME

The 2017 Verizon IndyCar Series season is finally here, and I am extremely proud to be heading into it as the reigning champion,

We had a lot of new events last year, and this year we'll be going to Gateway, which should be a fun event - IndyCar racing is always spectacular on short ovals. But otherwise, this season is all about continuity, which I think is a good thing for the series and the fans.

For us at Team Penske, it's all about building on what we did in 2016, when we finished 1-2-3 in the championship. Josef Newgarden has joined us this year and our aim is to go 1-2-3-4, but we know it is going to be tough. Everybody is on top of their game at the moment, across all of the teams we race against.

So we've been working really hard through the winter to try to find more from every little detail on the racecar, but also on strategy and things like that. The team seems pretty happy with the improvements, so for me personally it's about bringing my A-game once again and trying to do the best job I can.

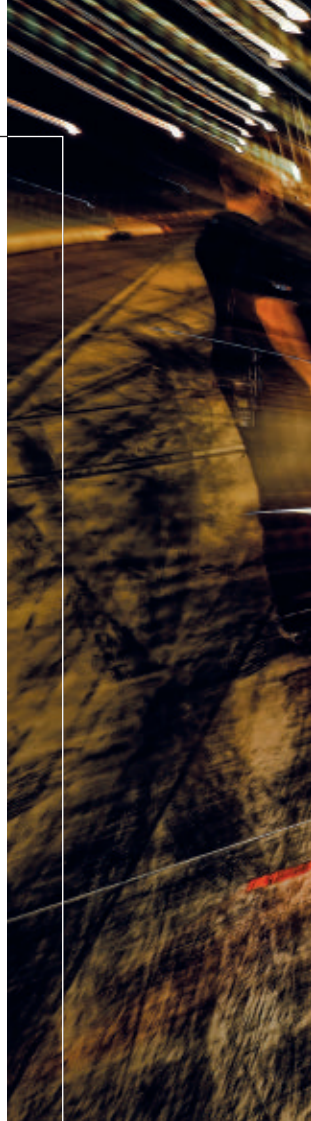
Whatever happens, it's going to be another incredible year of IndyCar racing. I'm looking forward to seeing you at the track!



Sean Rice



Joe Stombaugh/IndyCar



SIMON PAGENAUD

2016 VERIZON INDYCAR SERIES CHAMPION

CONTENTS

06
TOUGHING IT OUT IN 2017
To win the 2017 Verizon IndyCar Series, a driver and team have to deliver every single race weekend.

16
A MAN ON A MISSION
Simon Pagenaud is focused on one thing in 2017: becoming a two-time IndyCar Series champion.



29
MAKE WAY FOR THE NEW WAVE
Young guns like Josef Newgarden have grown into genuine title contenders.

Form and function... Development work is already underway on the Verizon IndyCar Series' universal aerodynamic bodywork kit that will be used by the entire field in 2018.



Dress rehearsal... The 2017 Verizon IndyCar Series field went head to head in pre-season testing at Phoenix International Raceway. For drivers like Marco Andretti (MAIN) it's a chance to reset, recalibrate and get ready to rumble.



06

Michael Levitt/LAT

36 SPEEDING INTO THE FUTURE

With 100 Indianapolis 500s in the record books, IndyCar racing looks forward to an exciting future.



40 RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARCH

St. Louis welcomes IndyCar racing back to the Gateway oval - and it's going to be fun!

42 A LEGEND IN THE MAKING

Scott Dixon is just a couple of victories away from open-wheel rarefied air - passing Michael Andretti for third spot on the all-time win list.



48 MEET THE 2017 DRIVERS

They'd rather be racing than posing for photos, but we got 'em...

50 FORTY SPOOKY SECONDS

Actually, make that 39 seconds... A 230mph-plus lap of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway is an inch-perfect, hold-your-breath thrill ride.

62 GET READY FOR THE BIG TIME

Mazda Road to Indy racers are learning fast, thanks to a ladder system that's developing the next generation of Brickyard heroes.



PHILIP ABOU/IAAT

BEST OF ENEMIES

Penske's four drivers work closely together off track, but when the visors go down it's every man for himself. (ABOVE) Simon Pagenaud and Will Power get in some pre-season sparring at the Phoenix International Raceway test.



INDYCAR 2017 SET FOR LAUNCH

Time to reload the confetti cannons in Victory Lane, because there's another thrilling season of IndyCar racing ahead.

Simon Pagenaud left nothing on the table in his successful quest for the 2016 Verizon IndyCar Series championship. But if he wants to keep the No.1 on his Team Penske Chevrolet through next winter, he's going to have to dig even deeper this time around, because there's a long line of tough rivals aiming to make it their own.

Once again, he'll face a serious threat from within his own camp. Penske drivers finished 1-2-3 in the points last year, and they've reinforced their line-up for 2017 by adding the guy who finished just behind them in fourth, Josef Newgarden. The 26-year-old is one of the sport's brightest young talents, and his move into the Penske fold is shaping up to be one of the



Chris Owens/MS Photo

season's most intriguing plotlines.

Pagenaud's concerns won't end with Penske. Chip Ganassi Racing's Scott Dixon won three of his four IndyCar crowns with Honda power, and he'll be reunited with the Japanese manufacturer this year after a

successful spell with Chevrolet. Chevy has topped the wins column for the past couple of seasons, but Honda and its teams haven't been sitting on their hands. Graham Rahal has recently led the Honda charge and will be keen to capitalize on two years of upward momentum, while long-time powerhouse Andretti Autosport has regrouped after a tough run and, led by 2012 champion and '14 Indy 500 winner Ryan Hunter-Reay, is gunning for the front. Add in the likes of Schmidt Peterson's James Hinchcliffe and it's a stacked field of contenders.

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The only truly predictable thing about the upcoming season is unpredictability. IndyCar wouldn't have it any other way.

It's amazing what a difference **0.0080sec** can make to your mood... **Graham Rahal** is ecstatic; **James Hinchcliffe** is deflated as Texas Motor Speedway supplies an ultra-close finish.



FOLLOW THAT...

2016 showed once again why the Verizon IndyCar Series is the fastest, closest racing on the planet.

0.0080sec

Graham Rahal's margin of victory on the Texas Motor Speedway oval.

173

Season-total lead changes from the 16 races held in 2016.

54

Number of lead changes in the 100th Running of the Indianapolis 500.

230.760mph

James Hinchcliffe's four-lap average speed to take the Indy 500 pole.

0.3032sec

Simon Pagenaud's winning margin on the streets of Long Beach.

8

Number of different race winners in 2016, including rookie Alexander Rossi.

15

Number of different drivers earning a top-three podium result.

300,000-plus

Number of cheering IndyCar fans at a sold-out Indianapolis 500.

2017? Bring it on!

THIS JUST IN...

HERE'S A LOOK AT SOME OF THE SIGNIFICANT MOVES AND CHANGES SHAKING UP THE 2017 VERIZON INDYCAR SERIES FIELD.



PENSKE'S LONG-TERM PLAN

Josef Newgarden landed the opportunity of a lifetime when he was hired by Penske for 2017. And at just 26 years old, he could be winning there for years to come.

GANASSI SWAPS BADGES

Chip Ganassi Racing had a lot of past success with Honda, and it ended a three-year stint with Chevrolet by reuniting with them for 2017.



BOURDAIS RETURNS "HOME"

Dale Coyne Racing was the squad that brought the Frenchman back to the U.S. after his time in F1, and his return is the tip of a broad overhaul of the Illinois team.

SATO'S CHANGE OF SCENERY

Takuma Sato has taken his speed, his experience and his many Japanese fans to Andretti Autosport. It's a move that also preserves his long-standing ties with Honda



EVERYTHING'S NEW AT A.J.'S

A.J. Foyt Enterprises had a busy off-season, adding two new drivers - Carlos Munoz and Conor Daly - and a new manufacturer partner in Chevrolet.

HILDEBRAND'S COMEBACK

J.R. Hildebrand last ran a full IndyCar season in 2012. He'll make a long-overdue return this year as Josef Newgarden's replacement at Ed Carpenter Racing.



HOW TO FOLLOW UP ON AMAZING

Alexander Rossi shocked the world with his upset win as a rookie in the 100th Running of the Indianapolis 500 last year. For 2017, he's aiming for better consistency across the entire season.

"For me, a positive improvement would

be to get into the Fast Six [qualifying group] straight away at St. Petersburg, and then we go from there," he says.

Aside from Indy, Rossi's best result in 2016 was a fifth place in the season finale on the Sonoma road course.



Alexander Rossi heads into a second IndyCar season with a year's worth of experience to lean on.



Gregg Eberman/LAT

Every seat was sold for the 100th Running of the Indianapolis 500 in 2016, but few were being used as the 33 starters took the green flag to start a memorable race.

UPWARD TRENDING

2016 boosters point to continuing momentum for the Verizon IndyCar Series.

A sell-out crowd for the 100th Running of the Indianapolis 500 was a banner day for the 2016 Verizon IndyCar Series, and the momentum being generated by the fastest, most versatile form of racing in the world is set to continue into 2017.

Other notables from last season included a packed house for the return of top-level open-wheel racing to Elkhart Lake's iconic Road America track, and a record number of total TV viewers for NBC Sport's IndyCar coverage, including

an increase in the 18-49 demographic.

The digital reach of IndyCar racing is growing fast, too, with IndyCar streaming and viewing on NBCSports.com and the NBC Sports app hitting new highs in 2016.

At Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the historic epicenter of American open-wheel racing, ticket sales for the 101st Indy 500 are already strong, with another bumper crowd anticipated for "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing," May 28.

"The momentum we had in 2016 for

the 100th Running has really carried over into 17," says IMS president Doug Boles.

"Since 2011 we've been on this trend of more attendance, and right now this year's '500' is projected to be significantly stronger than it was in 2015 for the 99th."

Beyond Indianapolis, the Verizon IndyCar Series has increased its schedule to 2017 races with the addition of the Gateway oval (see below), and continues its TV broadcast partnerships with ABC and the NBC Sports Network.



Philip Abbott/LAT

THUMBS-UP FOR GATEWAY'S RETURN

One thing's puzzling Helio Castroneves as the Verizon IndyCar Series prepares to return to the 1.25-mile Gateway oval for the first time since 2003.

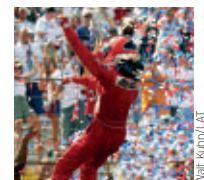
"To be honest, I never understood why we stopped coming to Gateway!" says the Team Penske driver. "I'm so glad IndyCar was able to make this happen."

Technically, the veteran Brazilian will start Aug. 26's Bommarito Automotive Group 500 as the race's defending champion, having beaten Tony Kanaan by 0.847sec for the win in '03.

The fact that both men will be in the field some 14 years later is testament to their undiminished competitiveness, but they'll have some tough competition.

Castroneves' new Penske teammate, Josef Newgarden, got a taste of the track during tire testing last fall and is looking forward to the challenge it presents.

"It's a fun track; it's definitely different," says Newgarden. "It's got a little bit of everything. I love short ovals anyway, so the more short ovals we can add, the better I feel."



Walt Kuhn/LAT

HELIO'S DAY
After the win, the climb... Castroneves celebrates his 2003 Gateway victory.

**SOMETIMES LIFE DOESN'T
THROW YOU ENOUGH CURVES.**



The 2017 Corvette Grand Sport carries on the racing spirit of the original 1963 design. With a naturally aspirated 6.2L LT1 V8 engine, a lightweight chassis and race-proven aerodynamics, Grand Sport offers 460 horsepower and 465 lb.-ft. of torque. Signature Corvette DNA and ingenious engineering help Grand Sport deliver superlative performance and handling.

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GRAND SPORT**

FIND *NEW* ROADS™

CHEVROLET 



...AND COUNTING
Ten Indy 500 wins might be beyond even Helio Castroneves (LEFT), but four certainly isn't. Tony Kanaan (BELOW) wants to deliver more success for Ganassi.



Shawn Gritzmacher/MS



Tim Holve

COYNE-OPERATED

The Verizon IndyCar Series driver incubator that is the Mazda Road to Indy keeps producing new talent. This season it's elevating 2016 Indy Lights champion Ed Jones into the big leagues.

The Brit follows in the footsteps of '15 Lights champ Spencer Pigot in securing a place on the grid, and will spend his rookie year alongside veteran Sebastien Bourdais at Dale Coyne Racing.

"I'm hugely excited about stepping up to IndyCar," Jones says. "This has been my goal ever since I left Europe to race in America. I worked hard for this opportunity and intend to grab it by the scruff of the neck and make the most of it."



Tim Holve

FAMILIAR FACES

The Verizon IndyCar Series' veterans still have everything to play for.

The IndyCar field is deep with drivers chasing their first championship, their first Indianapolis 500 victory - or maybe even their first race win. But there are also some seasoned veterans who are not chasing "firsts," but "mosts."

Helio Castroneves is hoping for one of each. The Brazilian is still chasing membership to the Indy 500 four-time winners' club, but he also continues to dream of a championship after finishing runner-up *four* times. He was third in the points last year, so it's well within reach.

Scott Dixon already has an Indy win and four championships, and would be delighted to add to both, but he's also just two victories away from catching Michael Andretti for third on the all-time list. The last time Dixon *didn't* win at least twice in a season was 12 years ago. Watch this space.

Ganassi team-mate Tony Kanaan also has a champions' trophy and a Baby Borg, but he's desperate to add a second win for CGR to go with Fontana in 2014.

So, grey hairs? A couple, maybe. Heavy right feet? Absolutely.



Chris Jones/IndyCar/MS Photo

EVERYBODY FREEZE!

The aero war between manufacturers Chevrolet and Honda hits pause this year, with the bodykits frozen in their 2016 specifications ahead of the rollout of the new standard aero package next year.

But that doesn't mean that the teams have taken an extended vacation over the winter. Penske dominated last year's championship, but still spent the off-season looking for more improvements, while teams that had less consistent campaigns in 2016 appreciated the chance to take a breather and look for opportunities to address weaknesses.

"It's the first time in three seasons that we're not learning a new aero kit," says Schmidt Peterson Motorsport's Honda-equipped James Hinchcliffe. "Last year we were taking big swings at things to try to figure stuff out. Now we have our base setups and a little bit of information behind us, we can start really diving into the little things that make a difference in a series that's so competitive. From the engineering point of view, we've had time to go through all this data and find things that you couldn't find in the mad thrash of the season, so I predict that as a team we're going to be much more prepared."

THE SPICE OF LIFE



With its mix of tracks, IndyCar is about variety. That's why it runs two different aero kits - one tailor-made for speedways (ABOVE), one for road/street courses.

THE ROAD TO THE CHAMPIONSHIP IS PAVED WITH RUBBER



WHATEVER YOU DRIVE
DRIVE A FIRESTONE



  @FirestoneRacing

Firestone
Official Tire of the Verizon IndyCar® Series



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indycar
series

DRIVE LIKE A CHAMPION

FIREHAWK INDY™ 500® - Our premier ultra-high-performance tire. Now with dramatically improved wet and dry handling at the same great price.*

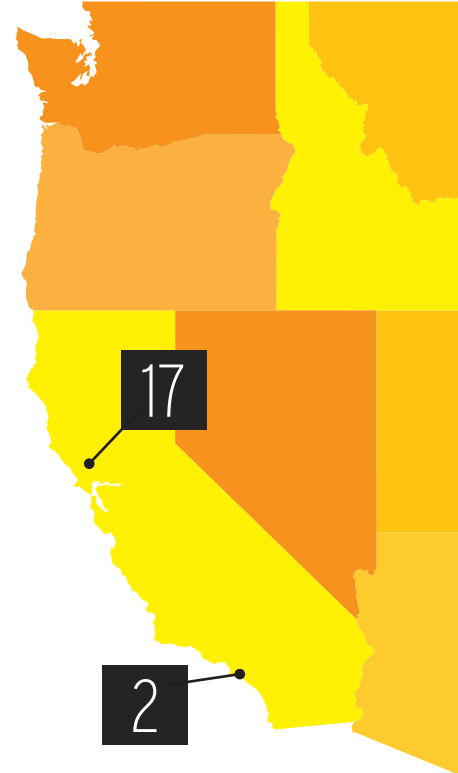
FIREHAWK™ AS - Improved wet and snow handling at a new lower price.** Backed by a 50,000-mile limited treadwear warranty.†

* As compared to the Firestone Firehawk Wide Oval Indy 500 Tire. ** As compared to the prior generation Firestone Firehawk Tire. †50,000 mile limited treadwear warranty for H&V speed rated tires. Certain conditions and limitations apply. See a Firestone representative or warranty manual for details. INDYCAR is a registered trademark of Brickyard Trademarks, Inc.



ALL TIMES ET

1	MARCH 12 12:30 P.M.		FIRESTONE GRAND PRIX OF ST. PETERSBURG Streets of St. Petersburg / ST. PETERSBURG, FLA. gpstpete.com			
2	APRIL 9 4:30 P.M.		43RD TOYOTA GRAND PRIX OF LONG BEACH Streets of Long Beach / LONG BEACH, CALIF. gplb.com			
3	APRIL 23 3:30 P.M.		HONDA INDY GRAND PRIX OF ALABAMA Barber Motorsports Park / BIRMINGHAM, ALA. barberracingevents.com			
4	APRIL 29 9:30 P.M.		PHOENIX GRAND PRIX Phoenix International Raceway / PHOENIX, ARIZ. phoenixraceway.com			
5	MAY 13 3:50 P.M.		INDYCAR GRAND PRIX Indianapolis Motor Speedway / INDIANAPOLIS, IND. indianapolismotorspeedway.com			
6	MAY 28 12:21 P.M.		101ST RUNNING OF THE INDIANAPOLIS 500 Indianapolis Motor Speedway / INDIANAPOLIS, IND. indianapolismotorspeedway.com			
7	JUNE 3 3:50 P.M.		CHEVROLET DETROIT GRAND PRIX RACE 1 The Raceway at Belle Isle Park / DETROIT, MICH. detroitgp.com			
8	JUNE 4 3:50 P.M.		CHEVROLET DETROIT GRAND PRIX RACE 2 The Raceway at Belle Isle Park / DETROIT, MICH. detroitgp.com			
9	JUNE 10 8:30 P.M.		RAINGUARD WATER SEALERS 600 Texas Motor Speedway / FORT WORTH, TEXAS texasmotorspeedway.com			
10	JUNE 25 1:00 P.M.		KOHLER GRAND PRIX Road America / ELKHART LAKE, WIS. roadamerica.com			
11	JULY 9 5:30 P.M.		IOWA CORN 300 Iowa Speedway / NEWTON, IOWA iowaspeedway.com			
12	JULY 16 12:30 P.M.		HONDA INDY TORONTO Streets of Toronto / TORONTO, ONT. hondaindytoronto.com			
13	JULY 30 3:30 P.M.		HONDA INDY 200 AT MID-OHIO Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course / LEXINGTON, OHIO midohio.com			
14	AUGUST 20 2:30 P.M.		ABC SUPPLY 500 Pocono Raceway / LONG POND, PA. poconoraceway.com			
15	AUGUST 26 9:30 P.M.		BOMMARITO AUTOMOTIVE GROUP 500 Gateway Motorsports Park / MADISON, ILL. gatewaymsp.com			
16	SEPT. 3 1:30 P.M.		INDYCAR GRAND PRIX AT THE GLEN Watkins Glen International / WATKINS GLEN, N.Y. theglen.com			
17	SEPT. 17 7:00 P.M.		GOPRO GRAND PRIX OF SONOMA Sonoma Raceway / SONOMA, CALIF. sonomaraceway.com			



TICKETS

On ovals, street tracks or road courses, seeing and experiencing the speed and excitement of a Verizon IndyCar Series race for real is a must-do. Ticket prices are exceptional value, especially once you factor in the easy access to drivers, the opportunity to see the mechanics at work between sessions and the great viewing spots at every venue. Find ticket details on www.indycar.com/schedule or via the individual track websites (see LEFT).



PLUS! For latest news and in-depth coverage of IndyCar, head to...
RACER.com

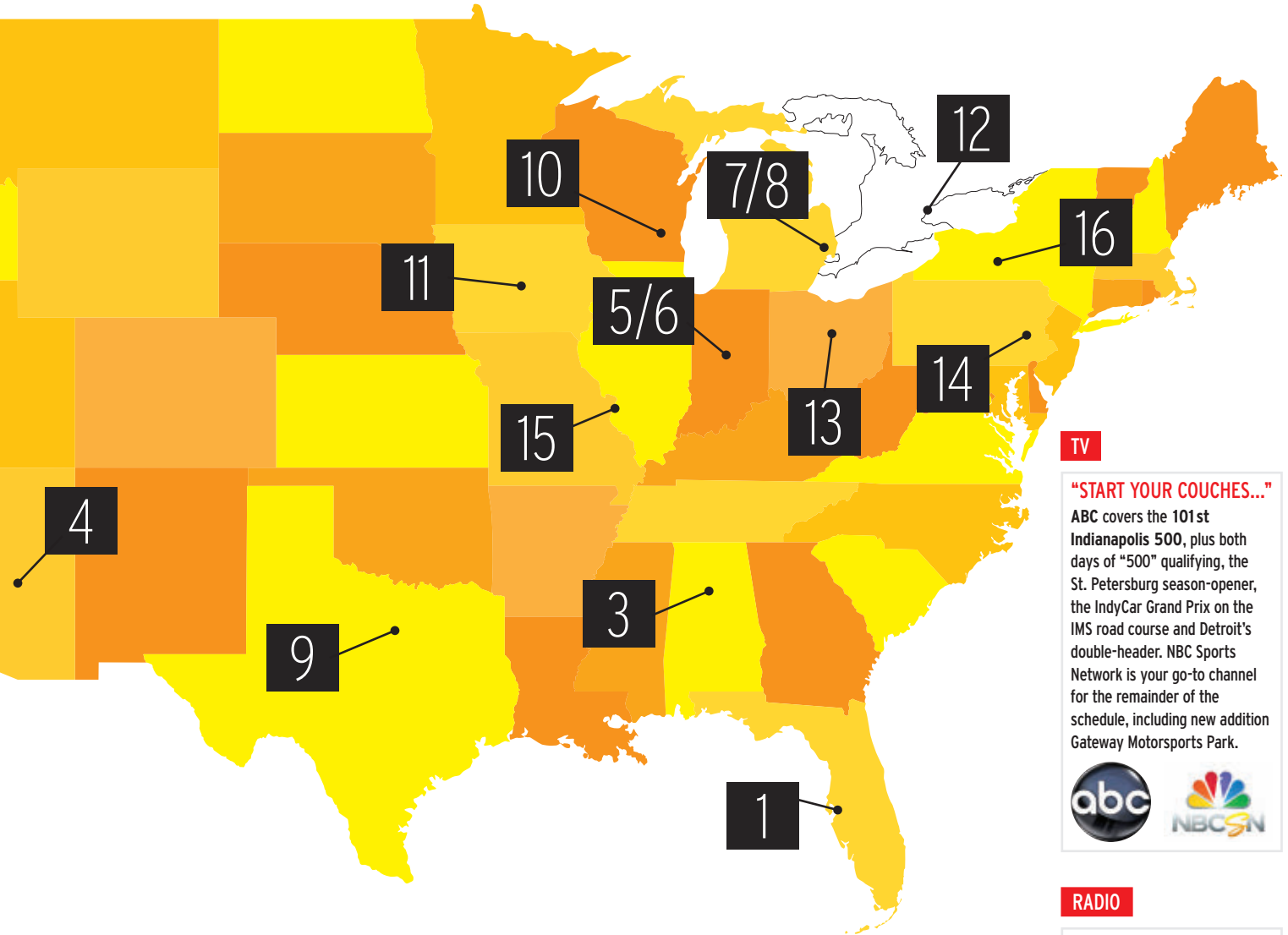
KEY STREET ROAD OVAL

Welcome back! Gateway Motorsports Park last featured on the Verizon IndyCar Series schedule in 2003 (RIGHT). It returns Aug. 26 for some classic oval action. Get tickets at gatewaymsp.com.



CATCH THE EXCITEMENT

There are multiple ways to get your 200mph fix of Verizon IndyCar Series excitement. Watch the action for real at some of America's most iconic tracks, or check it out from couch-racing central. It's all good.



TV

"START YOUR COUCHES..."

ABC covers the 101st Indianapolis 500, plus both days of "500" qualifying, the St. Petersburg season-opener, the IndyCar Grand Prix on the IMS road course and Detroit's double-header. NBC Sports Network is your go-to channel for the remainder of the schedule, including new addition Gateway Motorsports Park.



RADIO

THE SOUND OF INDY

The Advance Auto Parts IndyCar Radio Network provides live radio coverage of the Verizon IndyCar Series and all Indianapolis Motor Speedway events. It's available on network affiliates, indycar.com, indycarradio.com, Sirius 212, XM 209 and the INDYCAR Mobile App. Indy Lights races get the IndyCar Radio treatment, too.



MULTIMEDIA



INDYCAR.com is your go-to site for live timing, results, points, videos, stats, galleries, driver bios, fan info and a whole lot more from the Verizon IndyCar Series and Mazda Road to Indy. Plus, check out live video streaming from Verizon IndyCar Series practice sessions at 2017 events.



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VERIZON INDYCAR MOBILE APP

HIGH-SPEED CONNECTION

Don't just watch the race - feel it with INDYCAR Mobile, the official Verizon IndyCar Series Mobile App powered by Verizon.

The INDYCAR Mobile App redefines how fans watch racing. With an array of features that take the fan experience to the next level, it's the pinnacle of mobile tech.

Race fans are in the driver's seat as they take control of the information by selecting their favorite driver or team.

The app also offers live streaming of in-car camera feeds and radio broadcasts.

Combined with extras like real-time leader boards in interactive 3D race tracks, 2D marching ants and car telemetry, individual driver-pit crew communications, podcasts, driver Twitter feeds, news and alerts, the INDYCAR Mobile App is essential for Verizon IndyCar Series fans.

Exclusive features to Verizon Wireless customers include:

- Live in-car camera video streaming for select drivers during races.

- Enhanced real-time leaderboard with 2D marching ants and car telemetry.
- Follow the race in real time with the Interactive 3D track.
- Live driver/pit crew race transmissions.
- Live radio broadcast audio streaming during all track activities.

Features available to all customers (U.S. and worldwide) include:

- Real-time leaderboard with running order and championship points-as-they-run leaderboard.
- Exclusive VOD race highlights, driver interviews, historical footage and more.
- Breaking news and photo galleries.
- Driver and team profiles.
- And a whole lot more!

INDYCAR Mobile is available for iOS and Android devices. You can find out more at verizonwireless.com/indycar

The ultimate ride-along... Only 33 drivers get to start the Indianapolis 500, but Verizon Wireless customers have the next best thing, thanks to the INDYCAR Mobile App's exclusive features.

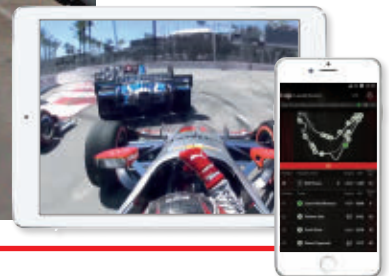
POWERING THE ULTIMATE RACING APP

Days before the start of a race, the Verizon INDYCAR Mobile App team can lay down as much as 100,000ft of fiber-optic cable to churn out 400,000 gigabytes of data from up to 42 cameras and a variety of sensors and radio connections.

More than a dozen individuals, between on-site and off-site locations, are needed to ensure that every aspect of the INDYCAR Mobile App, from live timing, to radio communications, to video streaming is ready to go.

Whether you're a die-hard or first-time fan, the result is an app that takes you deep inside the Verizon IndyCar Series race experience.

To download the INDYCAR Mobile App for iOS or Android, go to the applications section on your smartphone or tablet device, or visit verizonwireless.com/indycar.



101 RUNNING
INDY 500
MAY 28, 2017
PRESENTED BY:
PENNGRADE MOTOR OIL

FROM THE
**YARD
OF BRICKS[®]**
AT THE
INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY[®]
TO YOUR **GARAGE.**





2017 starts here... Reigning Verizon IndyCar Series champion Simon Pagenaud puts in the pre-season testing miles at Phoenix International Raceway as he prepares to defend his hard-earned crown.

Dario Franchitti (RIGHT) is the last Verizon IndyCar Series champ to successfully defend his crown. The Scot managed the feat twice, thanks to consecutive titles in 2009, '10 and '11.



NEXT TARGET

REPEAT MODE

Simon Pagenaud, 2016 Verizon IndyCar Series champion? That's all in the past. The new season is here, and for the Team Penske star, the celebrations are over. He's focusing only on his next challenge - winning another title.

WORDS Mark Glendenning MAIN IMAGE Sean Rice





BASKING IN THE GLOW

Simon Pagenaud saved his best for last in 2016, delivering an extraordinarily dominant performance at the Sonoma finale to beat Team Penske stablemate Will Power and secure his first Verizon IndyCar Series championship.

It's five months and a thousand lifetimes ago that Simon Pagenaud clambered from his Team Penske racecar at California's Sonoma Raceway and punched the air to announce himself as the new Verizon IndyCar Series champion.

The usual whirlwind followed: a rush of award ceremonies, interviews and appearances in a victory tour that stretched from the Pacific Coast to Paris. Somewhere in between, he took a vacation.

"It's been a busy winter with the championship and all the appearances everywhere in the world," he says. "It was good for me to get some time off, stay with my family. That's something I really needed. And rest as well, quite frankly. It was a rough season physically last year, too. So it was good to get some time off and recharge the batteries."

"I went to Daytona [for the Rolex 24], but for the first time as a spectator, and I actually enjoyed it very much. It was the



Behind any great driver is a great engineer, and the relationship between Simon Pagenaud and Ben Bretzman (LEFT) is especially close - the pair have worked together since 2010.

first time I ever watched a race with my boss [Roger Penske] there, so that was cool. I might do that race again some day, but this year I just didn't feel like it was the right thing to do for my program. I'm focused on attacking another title with Team Penske."

And to that end, he got back to work. As great an achievement as winning the IndyCar crown is, Pagenaud is very aware that what matters now is doing it again.

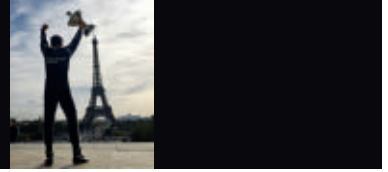
"I've had a lot of time to get used to being champion; a lot of time to

celebrate," says the Frenchman. "I've been very busy doing appearances and things. It was all very nice, and I enjoyed winning the championship, but now I'm hungry for even more. Once you've done it, you just want to do it again, and try to do it even better."

Pagenaud's 2016 campaign was impressive by any measure, and particularly so in a series as closely-fought as IndyCar. He opened his account with a five-race streak in which he never finished lower than second, and closed it with a dominant performance in the season finale at Sonoma. His final tally for the year stood at five wins, three other podiums and seven poles, but Pagenaud believes those numbers can be even better.

"I still see room for improvement," he says. "I've been digging hard to find what it was that I needed to improve since last year, and there are areas that this team still needs to work on. That's what's

Vive la France! Simon Pagenaud loves racing in North America, but remains a proud Frenchman. Showing off the champion's trophy at Paris's Eiffel Tower was a highlight of his victory tour.



(BELOW) Pagenaud reinforced his reputation as a hard racer in 2016 with moves like this one on Scott Dixon at Long Beach. (BOTTOM) As a reward for his title win, he - and his dog, Norman - went on a victory tour of his native France.



SCOTT R. LEPPER/LAT



Michael Levitt/LAT

TARGETING INDY GLORY

Simon Pagenaud's best Indy 500 finish is eighth, racing for Schmidt Peterson Motorsports in 2013 (ABOVE). Now with Team Penske, he feels ready to challenge for a win.

"I've had two good shots at it in the last two years," he says. "In 2015 I made a mistake, but I learned a lot about running up front (BELOW). And last year, unfortunately, we had a mechanical issue. But I feel like it's coming around. We have the ingredients to fight for it. It's the one we really want to win. To me, it's the most prestigious race in the world, and I really want to put my face on the trophy someday."



Philip Abbott/LAT

exciting, and that's where I found added motivation for this year. I feel refreshed, and I also feel a lot less pressure - which I think is a good thing for me, because I'm an anxious person to start with.

"You always have to prove yourself; that's what keeps you sharp. But now I know I can win a championship, and that's going to give me the extra confidence to go to the next level."

"NOW I KNOW I CAN WIN A CHAMPIONSHIP, AND THAT'S GOING TO GIVE ME EXTRA CONFIDENCE"

SIMON PAGENAUD

Recent form might be on Pagenaud's side, but history suggests that he can take nothing for granted in 2017. The simple fact of his being a defending champion puts him into territory that, in



the context of his own career, is uncharted. Pagenaud has won championships before, but he's never had a real opportunity to defend one - he moved up to Champ Car the year after winning the 2006 Atlantic title, and missed out on the chance to defend his 2010 LMP1 crown in the American Le Mans Series when his team closed down midway through the following year.

"That side of it is super exciting," Pagenaud admits. "I love competition. I

obviously love the fact that I was the best last year, and I want to show that I can do it again. I just want to perfect my art. I've always been very passionate about perfecting little edges, and that's what I want to do this year. Obviously you can't control all the outside factors, but what I can control, I want to do even better. And I believe that in this job, there are no limits to how much you can improve. That's really exciting for me."

In recent years, the only thing harder than winning a Verizon IndyCar Series championship has been successfully defending one. In the last two decades, only Sam Hornish Jr. and Dario Franchitti have achieved back-to-back titles. Pagenaud is mindful of the rarity of the feat, but isn't intimidated by it.

"It has definitely been difficult [for champions to defend]," he admits. "You see so many different winners every year, so many different teams doing well in >



Chris Owens/IMS Photo

HIT RESET

Preparations for Simon Pagenaud's Verizon IndyCar Series title defence began not long after the cars arrived back from Sonoma last year, but things ramped up when the full field gathered for testing at Phoenix in early February.

different years. I wouldn't be surprised to see Ganassi doing very well with the Honda package this year, for example. I wouldn't be surprised to see Andretti Autosport really getting its act together again. I think there will be a lot of competition this year, but I'm not too worried about it. I think it's best to just concentrate on yourself."

And in recent months, that's exactly what Pagenaud has been doing. The number on his car has changed from his standard-issue No. 22 to the much-vaunted No. 1 that's reserved exclusively for the champion, but other than that,

"I'M NOT GOING TO CHANGE ANYTHING. I THINK I FOUND MYSELF AS A DRIVER LAST YEAR"

SIMON PAGENAUD

the Frenchman's universe looks much as it did this time last year. He still has the same engineer in Ben Bretzman, he has the same group of guys looking after his racecar, and he's discovered a level of performance within himself that he now knows is capable of taking him to the very top.

"I'm not going to change anything," he says. "I think I found myself last year.



Shawn Grzimek/IMS Photo

I found who I am as a driver, and I found where I perform at my best. It's about finding the line you need to walk on as a person to be the best at what you do. And for me, that particular level of aggression [from last year] is where I need to be at. Not under. Not above - above would be too much. The key is to be able to find that level, and to stay there."

But there's an important distinction between "not changing anything" and "standing still." Finding an approach that works is imperative, but teams that don't actively work to progress quickly find themselves moving backward. Team Penske has been around far too long to

fall into that trap though, and the entire winter was devoted to taking the championship-winning car and finding ways to make it perform even better.

There's a caveat to that, in that any gains that Team Penske's engineers have found will also be shared with Pagenaud's teammates - no champion's privilege here. And while there are plenty of drivers who have spent their winters planning how to derail Pagenaud's hopes of going back to back, some of the biggest threats will come from within his own organization. Teammates Will Power and Helio Castroneves finished immediately behind Pagenaud in the points last year. Just behind them was Josef Newgarden, who is now also a Penske driver. But Pagenaud has already proven once that he can beat them. All that remains now is to execute.

"Over the past few weeks I've had reviews with different people on the race team, especially with Ben, my engineer," says Pagenaud. "I also had a good chat with Ron Ruzewski, the technical director, to understand the improvements that were made over the winter and get back to fully understanding where we're at for this year. That was a good moment to reset to zero and recognize that we're into 2017. Last year was great, but now we have to go and do it all again." ☺

Pagenaud (LEFT) believes that he found just the right level of aggression last year. Much of his effort over the winter has been directed toward making sure that he can replicate it this time around.



WHAT'S

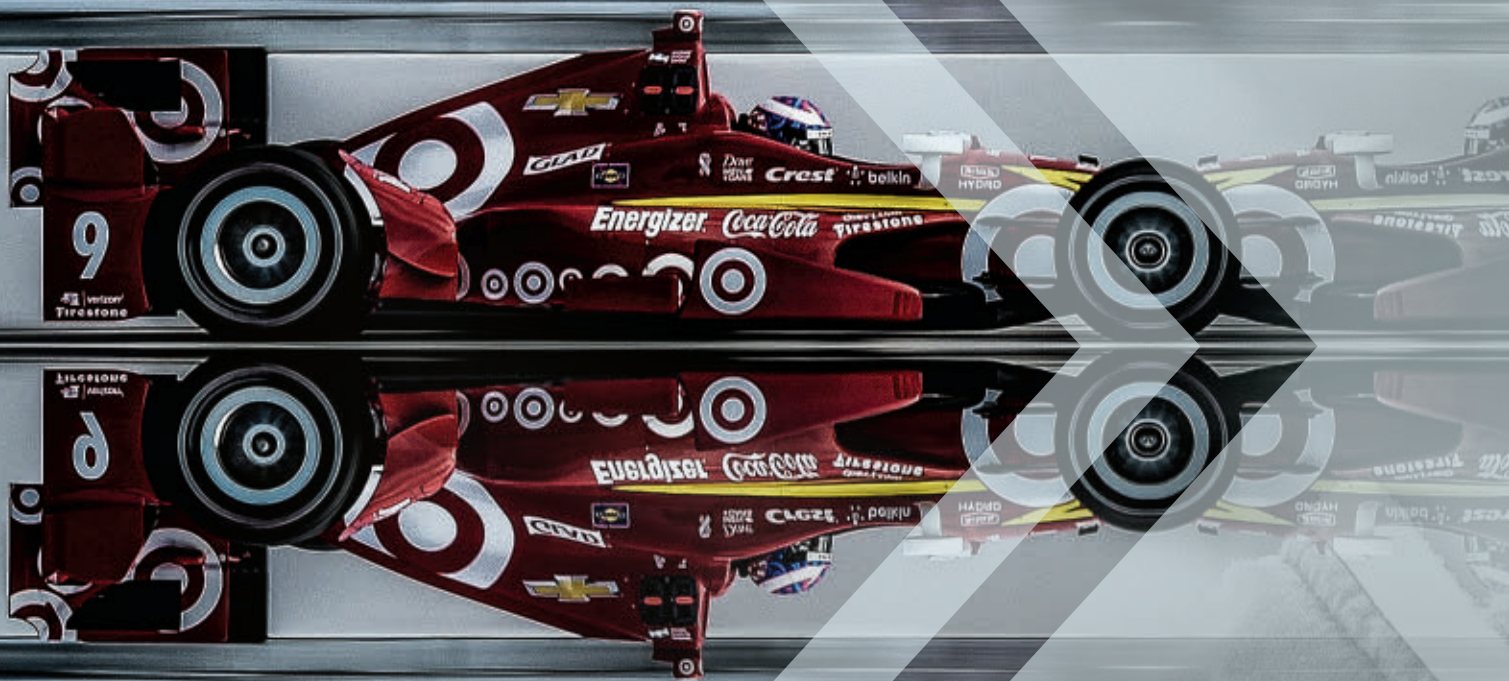
NEXT



2016 INDYCAR SERIES CHAMPION SIMON PAGENAUD

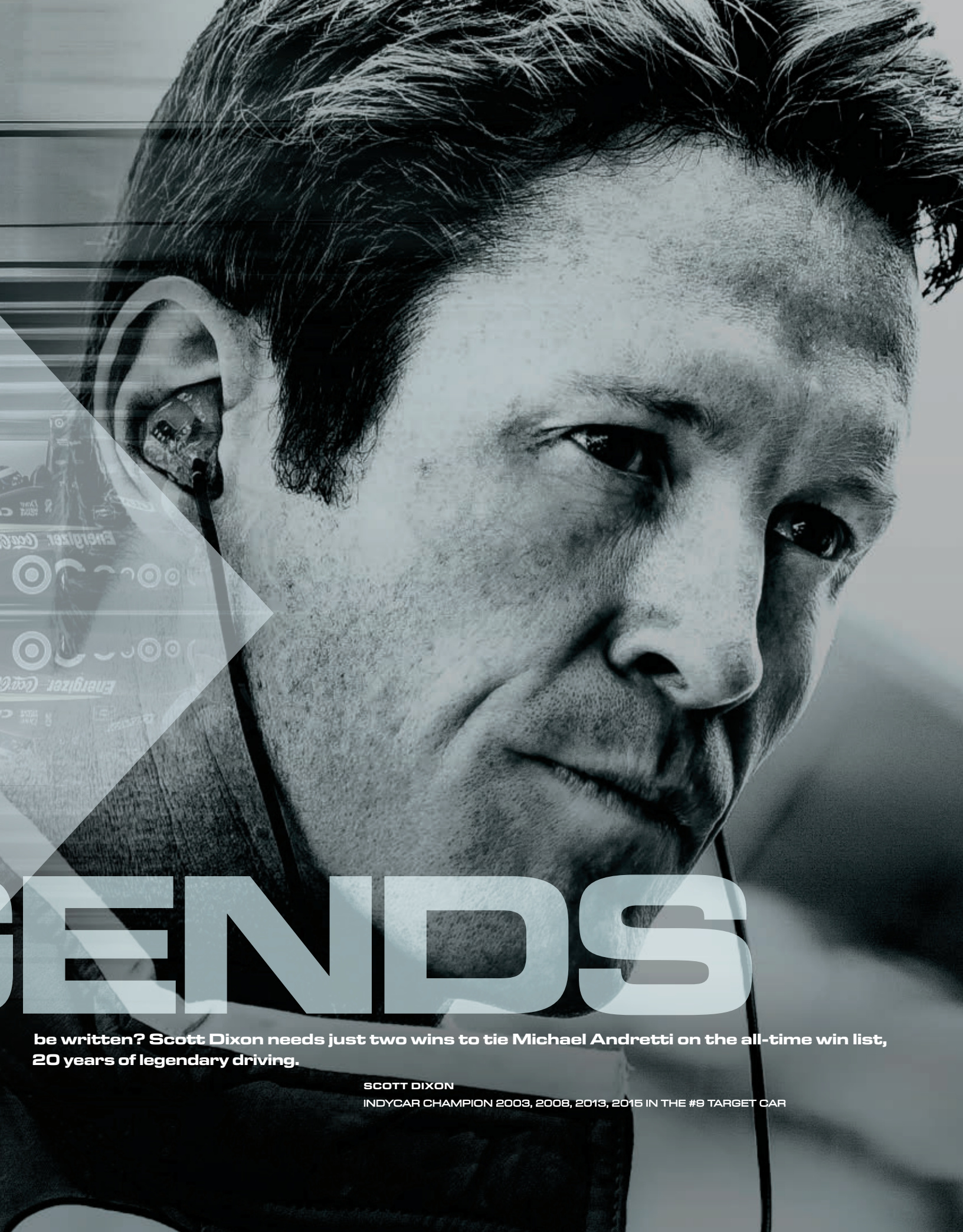


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LEEC

Will a new legend
Hélio Castroneves and Tony Kanaan will be fighting for their Next Indy 500 wins and celebrating



LEGENDS

be written? **Scott Dixon** needs just two wins to tie **Michael Andretti** on the all-time win list, 20 years of legendary driving.

SCOTT DIXON

INDYCAR CHAMPION 2003, 2008, 2013, 2016 IN THE #9 TARGET CAR



YOUNG

Josef Newgarden, James Hinchcliffe, Alexander Rossi,

JOSEF NEWGARDEN

83 CAREER INDYCAR STARTS, 3 WINS, 10 PODIUM FINISHES

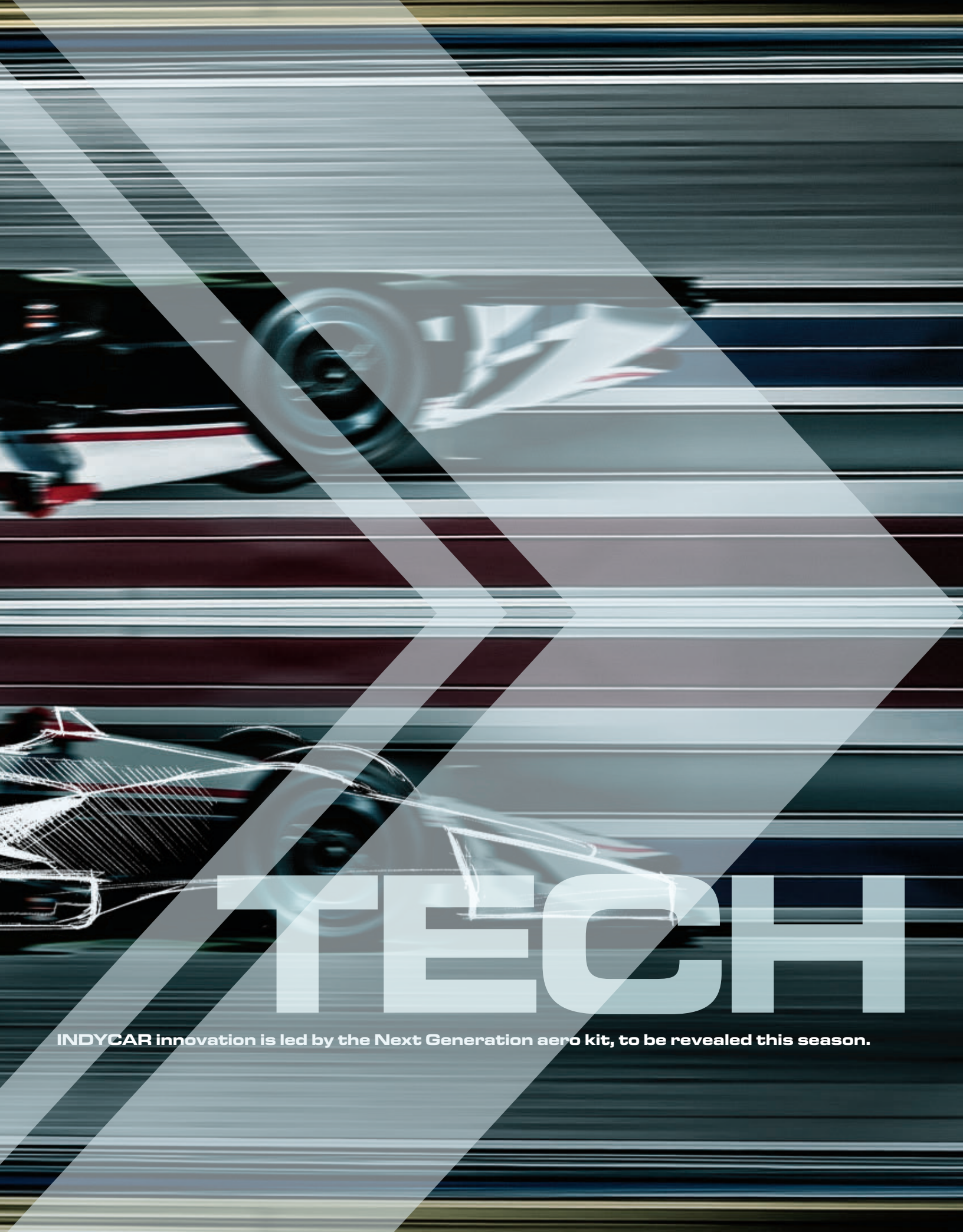
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GUINNESS

Graham Rahal and Marco Andretti are all on the who to watch Next list.





TECH

INDYCAR innovation is led by the Next Generation aero kit, to be revealed this season.

2017 VERIZON INDYCAR SERIES

ALL TIMES EASTERN. SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

S STREET/ROAD COURSE
O OVAL

MAR	12	S	Streets of St. Petersburg	12:00p	
APR	9	S	Streets of Long Beach	4:00p	
	23	S	Barber Motorsports Park	3:00p	
	29	O	Phoenix International Raceway	9:00p	
MAY	13	S	Grand Prix of Indianapolis	3:30p	
	20	O	Indianapolis 500 Qualifying Day 1	4:00p	
	21	O	Indianapolis 500 Qualifying Day 2	4:00p	
	28	O	Indianapolis 500 Mile Race	11:00a	
JUN	3	S	The Raceway at Belle Isle Park	3:30p	
	4	S	The Raceway at Belle Isle Park	3:30p	
	10	O	Texas Motor Speedway	8:00p	
	25	O	Road America	12:30p	
JUL	9	O	Iowa Speedway	5:00p	
	16	S	Streets of Toronto	3:00p	
	30	S	Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course	3:00p	
AUG	20	O	Pocono Raceway	2:00p	
	26	O	Gateway Motorsports Park	9:00p	
SEP	3	S	Watkins Glen International	1:00p	
	17	S	Sonoma Raceway	6:30p	

NEXT RACE

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INDYCAR. THE HEART OF RACING.

Mazda Road to Indy has been key in honing many of IndyCar's young guns. Josef Newgarden (LEFT) and Spencer Pigot are former Indy Lights champs, and James Hinchcliffe was a runner-up.



INDYCAR PRESENTS
NEXT GENERATION
YOUNG GUNS
TOUR 2017



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THE NEXT WAVE

TALKIN' 'BOUT OUR GENERATION

IndyCar racing's old guard has dominated in recent years, but a rising swell of fast upstarts is rapidly closing in. The championship fight is about to get a whole lot tougher...

WORDS Mark Glendenning ILLUSTRATION Paul Laguette



Shawn Gitzmacher/IMS Photo

THE MERITOCRACY

New Team Penske signing Josef Newgarden earned his way into IndyCar's biggest team by delivering the goods with a smaller one. And at 26 years old, he could remain a central part of The Captain's plans for years to come.

The youngest gun... Graham Rahal is the youngest race winner in Verizon IndyCar Series history, winning on the streets of St. Petersburg in 2008 aged just 19 years and 93 days.



Tim Hele

Generational change has a way of sneaking up unannounced - ask any Gen X-er looking at toddler clothes emblazoned with Nirvana and Guns 'n' Roses logos in the local department store. Or, go to a Verizon IndyCar Series track.

There are few sports where the likes of James Hinchcliffe (82 starts and four wins) or Josef Newgarden (82 starts and three) could lay any sort of claim to "rising star" status, but IndyCar is different. For every meteoric arrival on the IndyCar stage - we're looking in your direction, Alexander Rossi - there are many more for whom full membership to the establishment comes over a longer period of time. That's no reflection on them, but speaks instead to the many things that make IndyCar racing unique.

The longevity of its incumbent superstars is one example. Tony Kanaan and Helio Castroneves are both on the other side of 40, but there's a reason that they continue to hold topline drives with Chip Ganassi Racing and Team Penske, respectively - they're still running up at the front, weekend after weekend.

Newgarden acknowledges that the old guard aren't simply going to move aside for the sport's up-and-comers, so it's up to the newest wave to fight for their place alongside them.



Shawn Ortiz/Action/MS Photo

"Having guys like Helio and Kanaan, who've been around for so long and are so well recognized as the faces of the sport, I think it's inevitable that you can still look at guys like myself, Hinchcliffe, [Graham] Rahal and others as the rising stars," he says. "We haven't dethroned those guys yet - we haven't won championships and Indianapolis 500s, excluding Alexander Rossi. So we haven't pushed ourselves out of that 'rising star' category."

When you consider that Newgarden finished fourth in the points last year - right behind the three drivers who he will join at Team Penske this season - you could make

a case that championships might not be too far away in his future. He's spent the past five seasons building himself up from rookie to title contender - a timeframe that James Hinchcliffe believes is just about typical in an era where testing restrictions force younger drivers to do most of their learning during a race weekend.

"We race in an era where testing is so limited," he says. "And track time on race weekends is pretty limited, too. So you have to do three, four, five seasons before you've got that solid bank of experience that allows you to really compete with the guys who've been doing it for a decade or more.

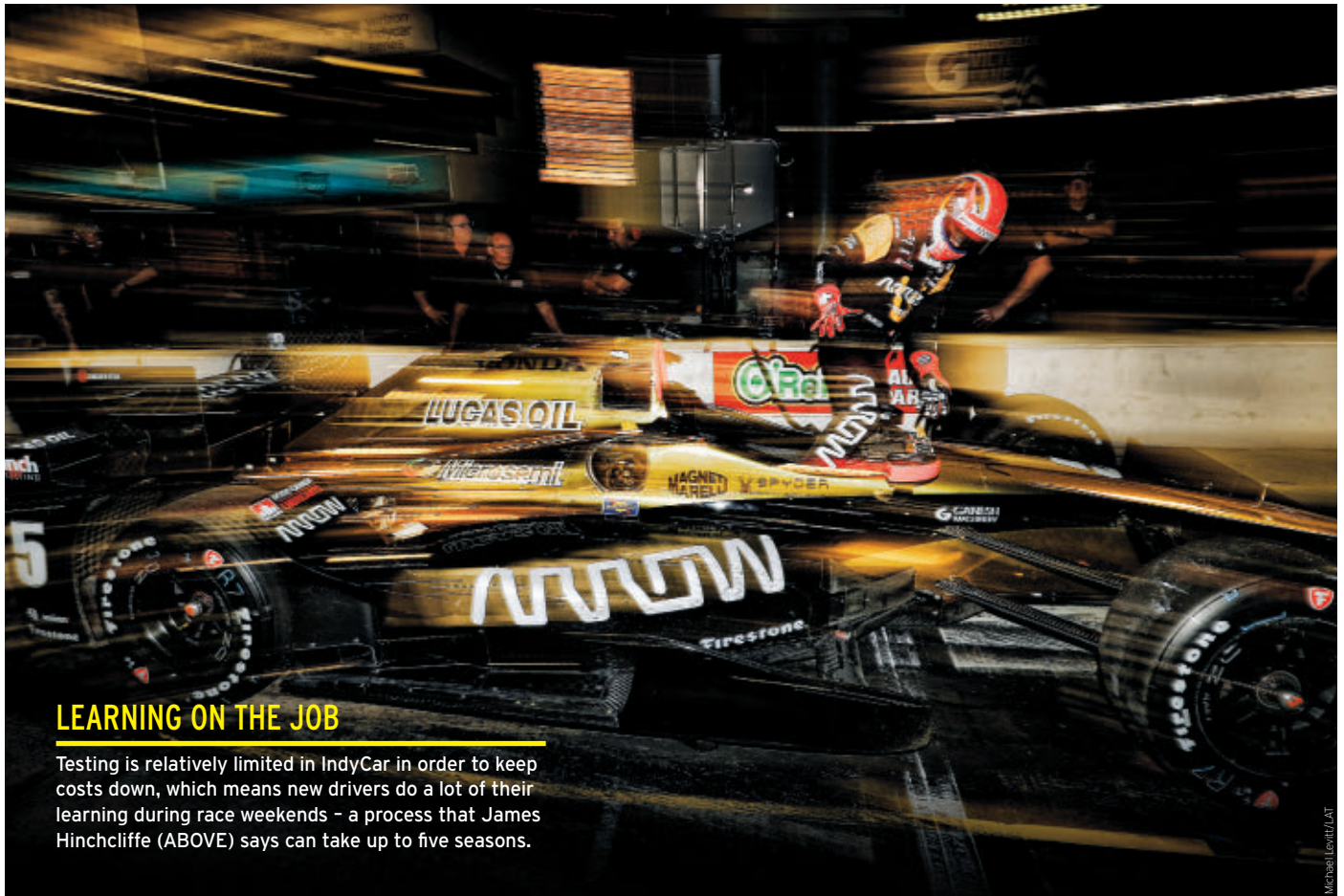
"WE HAVEN'T DETHRONED THE VETERANS YET - WE HAVEN'T WON CHAMPIONSHIPS AND INDY 500S"

JOSEF NEWGARDEN

That's why it does take longer for those young drivers to become potential race winners and championship contenders."

Hinchcliffe himself has already navigated much of that curve, as evidenced by his stunning pole position at Indy last year. But it's a different story for A.J. Foyt Enterprises sophomore Conor Daly. The 25-year-old found the podium >

(ABOVE) Conor Daly is swapping a Dale Coyne Racing Honda for an AJ Foyt Racing Chevy for his second full Verizon IndyCar Series season. (LEFT) Josef Newgarden celebrates his 2016 Iowa Speedway win - the kind of performance that caught Roger Penske's attention.



LEARNING ON THE JOB

Testing is relatively limited in IndyCar in order to keep costs down, which means new drivers do a lot of their learning during race weekends - a process that James Hinchcliffe (ABOVE) says can take up to five seasons.

"WE DON'T HAVE A LOT OF TESTING THESE DAYS - BUT I GREW UP WITH NOT A LOT OF TESTING"

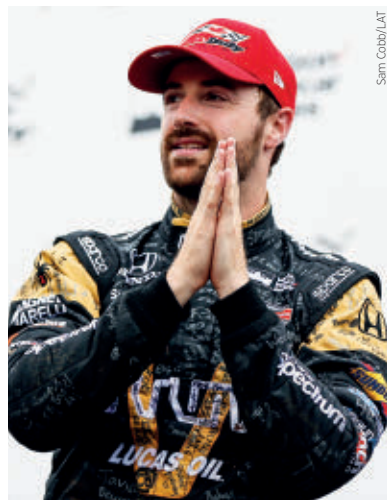
CONOR DALY

as a rookie in Detroit last year, but admits that he has a lot of on-the-job learning still to do if he's to stake out a regular place for himself at the front of the pack.

"We don't have a lot of testing these days, but I grew up with not a lot of testing," he says. "You hear about guys like Lewis Hamilton [in F1] doing 300 days of testing or whatever before his first grand prix - stuff like that doesn't happen anymore.

"Trying to be more consistent is really important, and that part is really difficult, because you can go from having a couple of great weekends on road and street courses to being totally lost at a short oval like Phoenix.

"What I'm trying to make sure of right now is that we can finish in the top 10 more consistently. Or, even if we don't finish in the top 10, that we go to a place



Sam Cobb/LAT

like Phoenix and have a strong performance where we've developed the car on the technical side."

Daly alludes to another element of IndyCar racing that has become one of its hallmarks: the diversity of its tracks. No other series on the planet requires its

drivers to race on road courses, street courses and ovals - and the latter is essentially a series of subcategories in itself, considering how few of the lessons learned at a superspeedway like Indianapolis can be applied to a short track like Iowa.

That challenge is precisely why drivers love the series so much, but it makes for a challengingly broad skill set for a newcomer to have to master.

"That just comes down to years of practice," says Hinchcliffe. "You're only doing one 1.5-mile track per year at Texas, so it's going to take a while to get a few of those races under your belt and get that experience. You only do one - or two, depending on the schedule - 500-mile races. So learning how to be patient, and how to be competitive, and how to race in a 500-miler takes seasons of experience."

But there's another aspect of IndyCar racing that, while not necessarily playing into the hands of upcoming drivers, at least helps to even the odds. Aside from the engines and aero parts designed by the manufacturers, the cars are identical >

James Hinchcliffe (LEFT) was seriously injured in a practice crash at Indianapolis in 2015 and missed the rest of that season as he recovered. He returned to the Brickyard last year - and earned the pole for the 100th Running of the Indy 500.



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ROUND TWO

Alexander Rossi has fond memories of his rookie victory in last year's Indy 500, but is now looking forward to converting a season's worth of experience into a more consistent 2017 sophomore campaign.



Shawn Gitzmacher/IMS Photo

A permanent reminder... Alexander Rossi, winner of the 100th Running of the Indianapolis 500, unveils his likeness on the Borg-Warner Trophy. He gets to keep a "baby" replica of it, too.



across the field. The Team Penske Chevy that Simon Pagenaud won last year's title in shared much of its DNA and nuts and bolts with the Honda that Daly was driving at the time for Dale Coyne Racing.

While 90 percent of a Formula 1 driver's performance is dictated by their car, there's far less mechanical differentiation in IndyCar, and therefore far more opportunity for the drivers themselves to make a difference. That means that any driver in the field has a shot at winning if they have their act together, even if they're yet to acquire the experience needed to maintain that level of competitiveness every weekend. Just look at Rossi, whose Indy 500 win came in just his sixth IndyCar start, and first-ever race on a superspeedway. The Californian moved directly into IndyCar from F1, and he says that it took him a few races just to work out what kind of handling characteristics he wanted from his car, never mind how to achieve them.

"We only had two days of testing prior to St Petersburg, and then we went to Phoenix, which was a whole new thing for me," Rossi says. "But by Barber, which was the third race, I knew what I was looking for from the car."

"Although we had a good Month of May last year, there's a lot that we can do to



"LAST YEAR I WAS NEW TO ALL OF THE TRACKS, WHEREAS THIS YEAR I KNOW ALL BUT ONE"

ALEXANDER ROSSI

improve this season. We never made it to the Fast 6 [qualifying in 2016]. But the superspeedways were strong, and short ovals were OK, surprisingly - especially for me, having zero oval experience. Road and street courses, which should have been my strong suit, were our weakest part.

"And last year I was new to all of the tracks, whereas this year I know all but one. That's immediately going to be a big improvement for me, personally."

While that relative parity of equipment leaves fewer places to hide, it also creates more opportunities to shine. Newgarden

earned Penske's attention by winning three races with the smaller, but very capable, Ed Carpenter Racing team.

"You have a much greater opportunity to succeed in IndyCar racing than you do in any other form of motorsport right now, which is great," says Newgarden. "You can take what might not be considered the strongest team on the grid and potentially win races with it."

"That's probably what everybody loves most about the series right now. But it takes a lot of time to develop the skills to consistently win, or consistently be competitive. You throw fuel saving into the mix with that, and race strategy, and race management...the more you do it, the more knowledge you gain."

In moving to the team that won last year's championship, Newgarden in particular stands poised to capitalize on that knowledge gained over the past five years, and carve a space for himself alongside the sport's established icons. Hinchcliffe has every reason to expect more wins in his future, too.

Rossi and Daly? As with fellow newcomers like Spencer Pigot, they'll get exponentially better as they continue to gain experience over the next few seasons.

The future is yet to be written, but it's clearly in very good hands. 🍷

(ABOVE) Alexander Rossi stunned the world with his win at Indy last year. (LEFT) Spencer Pigot will be focused on road and street courses as he continues the relationship with ECR forged last season.



THE NEXT 100 YEARS

THE FUTURE IS WIDE OPEN

Can you improve on greatness? Of course you can. And both IndyCar and Indianapolis Motor Speedway are already on the case.

At this time of the year, the Verizon IndyCar Series world is buzzing with chatter about the dawning of the new season. Behind the scenes though, the longer-term vision is taking shape.

“Shape” being the key word when it comes to the cars themselves. 2017 is the final year for the manufacturer aero kits before a new, standardized aero package is introduced for 2018 through to 2020. Early visual impressions have been restricted to sketches, but those are enough to get the message out: the future of IndyCar is fast, sleek and beautiful.

“The car was designed based on looking at 20 years of cars,” said IndyCar president of competition and operations Jay Frye. “We took different things that

we liked off each one and tried to come up with something we could put together and have a ‘wow factor’ to it.”

Initial reaction from the paddock has been overwhelmingly positive. Drivers, teams and fans are excited by the look of the new racecar, but they’re even more sold on the prospect of IndyCar’s already close racing becoming even more competitive.

“Everything I’ve heard has been really positive so far,” Frye said.

The coming year also represents an opportunity for reflection and for moving forward for the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the sport’s epicenter.

Last year’s 100th Running of the Indianapolis 500 was the ultimate celebration of the event’s extraordinary



ACCELERATED PROGRESS

Carl Fisher’s vision was a giant, five-mile test track for auto makers to push ideas to the limit. The resulting Indianapolis Motor Speedway was half the length, but no less a catalyst for innovation.

Alexander Rossi doesn't need a ticket to get into the 101st Running of the Indianapolis 500, May 28, but as the **defending race winner**, he will appear on thousands of them (RIGHT).



So far, our preview of how the Verizon IndyCar Series will look in 2018 has been restricted to some preliminary teaser sketches. The design has evolved a little since, but the underlying message is very clear: the future looks fast.

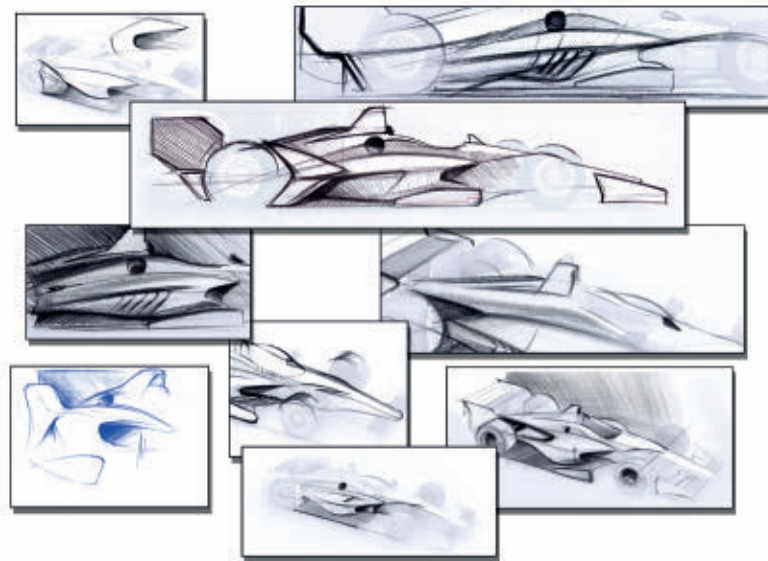


THE FINE ART OF INNOVATION

The Indianapolis 500 has always been about pushing the limits, and right from the start, innovation and Indy went hand in hand.

The current era of spec cars has changed the equation somewhat, but innovation lives on at the Brickyard in other ways.

"There are still so many innovative things happening," says Doug Boles. "For example, the way the cars communicate to the pitstands, and the ways we're learning to have the cars communicate to our fan in the grandstands. I think innovation that involves our fans is the most important form right now."



heritage, but now the focus switches to what the next 100 races might look like. According to IMS president Doug Boles, it's about making sure the future of the Indy 500 lives up to its illustrious past.

"One of the things that makes the 500 special is its history and tradition, and that will always be central to our DNA," said Boles. "Without it, we're just another race. But what the end of the first century and beginning of the second will allow us to do is use those first 100 races as a chance to talk and think about what the next 100 races are going to be like."

It's difficult to forecast anything 100 years ahead, especially in a world that develops as quickly as motorsports. But Boles expects speed and innovation to

"THE INDIANAPOLIS 500'S HISTORY AND TRADITION WILL ALWAYS BE CENTRAL TO OUR DNA"

IMS PRESIDENT DOUG BOLES

remain at the heart of the "500" for years to come - although the relationship between the two might change.

"Speed has always been central to the Speedway, and the Indy 500 in particular," he said. "But if you rewind to the early 2000s and even before that, safety has been central to innovation and has driven change - not just in the IndyCar world, but across the sport.

"While they were independent before,

speed and innovation have come together now. And while there is still some innovation on the car side, even in a standardized format, innovation is happening on the track side as well.

"We've been able to maintain speeds that are near our track record, yet the safety for our drivers and participants and fans is higher than it has ever been. The SAFER barrier is an example of that. "Those words 'speed' and 'innovation' are important, but you have to think about the definition of them in today's age compared to the definition in 1985."

Taken together, all this might be the most exciting thing about IndyCar 2017. The present is bright - but the future looks even brighter. ☺



The Indy 500's DNA is same today as it was at the first race in 1911



MAY 2017	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
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INDY 500 POLE DAY

PREP DETROIT PARTS

CARB DAY

INDY 500!

* INDY STRIP CARS

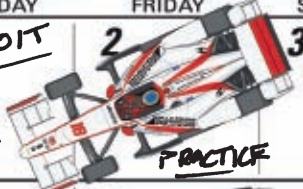
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MEMORIAL DAY

DETROIT SET UP IN Paddock



PRACTICE

DETROIT RACE 1!

DETROIT RACE 2!

TEXAS SET UP DAY



TEXAS RACE

DOWN TO THE MINUTE

You know that the Verizon IndyCar Series season is playing out at breakneck speed when you're planning work on the racecars not on a day-by-day schedule, but on an hour-by-hour and even minute-by-minute basis.

Converting cars from **speedway to road-course spec** in the IMS garages didn't hurt Dale Coyne Racing last year. **Conor Daly's** second-place in Detroit (RIGHT) was its best result of 2016.



THE NEXT RACE

QUICK-CHANGE ARTISTS

For Dale Coyne Racing, a new race begins when the checkers wave at Indy.

It's stating the obvious to say that no team wants to crash at Indy. But Dale Coyne Racing just might be crossing its collective fingers harder than anyone else, because only six days after competing on the Verizon IndyCar Series' biggest stage, those very same Coyne cars will be racing around Detroit's Belle Isle, magically transformed from speedway to street spec.

Many of the full-time IndyCar teams will prepare separate cars for the Indy/Detroit double-header, but for Coyne's small, yet effective group, the road to "Motor City" begins with a busy couple of days rebuilding



MICHAEL LEWIS/LAT

"THE PROBLEM IS WHEN YOU HAVE A CRASHED CAR AFTER INDY - LAST YEAR WE DIDN'T HAVE A BACK-UP"

DALE COYNE

the cars that just finished the "500." And those days become all the more intense if their Indy outing ended in the wall.

"The problem is when you come out of Indy with a crashed car," Coyne says. "You may have a back-up car, but if you look at last year, we ran four cars at Indy so we didn't have one. Well I guess we did, because we only ran two cars in Detroit - but the back-ups were still in oval trim."

Even if the team makes it through Indy with its primary cars in decent shape, a couple of busy days lie ahead. Coyne's team is based in Chicago, so it remains camped at the Speedway for three days to convert the cars into street-course spec.

Few parts of the racecar remain untouched. The aero pieces are different, including the underwing; the rockers are changed; the shims and steering arms used to create oval-friendly, left-side positive camber are taken out, and the shocks are swapped over. The latter is one of the few jobs that the team can get a head start on.



MICHAEL LEWIS/LAT

(TOP) Dale Coyne Racing hit the "refresh" button over the winter, welcoming Sebastien Bourdais - who previously raced with the team in 2011 - and Indy Lights champ Ed Jones. One thing that won't change? The familiar sight of Dale Coyne himself standing on the pitwall (ABOVE).

"If we have our act together we'll have actually started building the Detroit shock absorbers at some point during the second week at Indianapolis," says Coyne engineer Craig Hampson. "And if we're not in a panic, we would already be taking what would be spares or options for Indy and starting to convert them to street-course spec."

But the work doesn't stop there. The transmission needs to be completely rebuilt; a task that involves switching the spool for a differential, and installing a vastly different set of gear ratios.

"The big teams will have gearboxes that they use only for Indianapolis, so they'll take the entire gearbox off the car and then put a road course-spec gearbox on," says Hampson. "They'll also have custom builds on their wheel bearings. We don't have a lot of spare pieces, so we have to rebuild the wheel bearings between the two races."

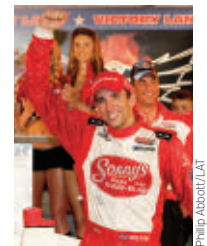
By Monday night, the car has been stripped more or less bare; by early Wednesday, it's back together again - just in time to make the 300-mile drive to Detroit that same day. Thursday is spent getting set up in the Belle Isle paddock. The team takes a moment to catch its breath...and then watches its cars roll out for first practice on Friday. ☉

SMALL TEAM, BUT BIG RESULTS

Dale Coyne Racing is one of IndyCar's smaller teams, but it knows its way to Victory Lane. It now has four race wins to its credit, two courtesy of the late Justin Wilson.

The Brit opened the team's account at Watkins Glen in 2009, and then added another victory at Texas Motor Speedway in 2012.

Coincidentally, both of Coyne's other wins came during double-header events: Mike Conway in Detroit, 2013, and Carlos Huertas in Houston, 2014.



PHILIP ABBOTT/LAT

(ABOVE) Justin Wilson celebrates a Texas-sized win in 2012.



From St. Louis's iconic Gateway Arch, the Gateway Motorsports Park is just a 15-minute drive across the Mississippi River, in Madison, Ill. Race fans are set for a spectacle when the Verizon IndyCar Series makes its welcome return, Aug. 26.

6+6+5

As in, six ovals, six road courses and five street races making up the 2017 Verizon IndyCar Series schedule. It's not called the most versatile racing on the planet for nothing.



Chris Jones/IndyCar/IMS Photo

THE NEXT TRACK

ARCH RIVALS

St. Louis. Home of rapper Nelly, a giant arch, pizzas with cracker-like crusts and the Cardinals, recently described by ESPN as one of baseball's "last bastions of old-school." And now, for the first time since Josef Newgarden was a pre-teen, it has the Verizon IndyCar Series, too.

Newgarden was a 12-year-old kid when Helio Castroneves - now his teammate at Team Penske - beat Tony Kanaan for the win at IndyCar's last visit to Gateway Motorsports Park in 2003. But after testing on the 1.25-mile oval ahead of the series' Aug. 26 return, Newgarden thinks that fans and drivers are in for a treat.

"I think it will race really well," he says. "The way the track opens up in Turns 3 and 4 makes it very wide and very useable. And because the straightaways are a bit longer, you have a good opportunity to capitalize on a run."

Castroneves believes that Newgarden's prediction will prove to be spot-on. But his own reasons for being excited about returning to Gateway run far deeper.

"We should have phenomenal racing, because you can really position yourself to pass someone," says the Brazilian. "I've seen some of Josef's data from testing, and it looks like we will be flat-out."

"I have a special feeling about that place," he adds. "It's always nice to go back to a track where you've won, but in 1999 I used to drive for Hogan Racing in CART and they were from St. Louis, so I always enjoyed going there. To be honest, I never understood why we stopped coming to Gateway! I'm so glad that IndyCar was able to make this happen. I know it's going to be a great event."

(TOP) Several Verizon IndyCar Series drivers got a taste of what's to come when they visited the Gateway oval for testing in the fall of 2016.



Michael Andretti (LEFT) earned 42 wins during his top-level open-wheel career, but Chip Ganassi Racing's Scott Dixon is just two victories short of matching that total.

2008 is Scott Dixon's most successful IndyCar season to date. Six wins, including the 92nd Indianapolis 500 (RIGHT) secured the second of his so-far three series championships.



THE NEXT LEGEND

“YOU WANT TO JOIN OUR CLUB?”

Michael Andretti sits third on IndyCar's all-time wins list - but Scott Dixon is within striking distance of joining him in the legends' club.

WORDS Mark Glendenning IMAGES Sean Rice





BACK TO THE FUTURE

Many of Dixon's wins came with Honda power, and he'll have the chance to add more this year as Ganassi resumes its partnership with HPD after three years with Chevy.

If you know anything at all about Scott Dixon, then you know this: his career stats are unrivalled among his peers - and you're almost certainly more interested in talking about that than he is.

The four-time Verizon IndyCar Series champion and 2008 Indianapolis 500 winner is famously deflective when it comes to discussing his achievements, preferring instead to pass the credit on to those around him and get on with chasing that next win. But he's been so effective at the second part that the conversation is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore.

Dixon goes into the upcoming season fourth on IndyCar's all-time win list with 40 career victories, but he's just two wins short of catching Michael Andretti for third. Could 2017 be the year that he does it? Wins are hard to come by in a series as competitive as IndyCar, yet the last time that Dixon *didn't* win at least two races in a season was way back in 2005. There are no guarantees in racing, but it's safe to say that Andretti needs to start looking over his shoulder.

"Obviously over the last few years the win list has become a topic of conversation," Dixon concedes. "But I think it changes a lot through the eras, too. Michael had extreme dominance in his era, but it was also a time when the



Michael Levitz/LAT

"I ENVY SCOTT'S ERA BECAUSE OF RELIABILITY. I PROBABLY GAVE AWAY AS MANY RACES AS I WON..."

MICHAEL ANDRETTI

cars had a lot of mechanical failures. I'd hate to know how many races he was leading and then had something break due to a mechanical thing. With our era now, the field is a little more deep, but the car is also 90 percent reliable. So there are always different factors and different ways of achieving those numbers in different periods of time.

"For me, I love doing what I do, and I feel very honored to be doing so well on that list and being mentioned alongside guys that I consider to be the greats of the sport. Yeah, it's an honor."



Michael Levitz/LAT

Dominance... Seven of Michael Andretti's wins came at Toronto, including this one in 2000 (ABOVE LEFT). As always, Scott Dixon (ABOVE) comes into 2017 as a probable IndyCar Series title contender.

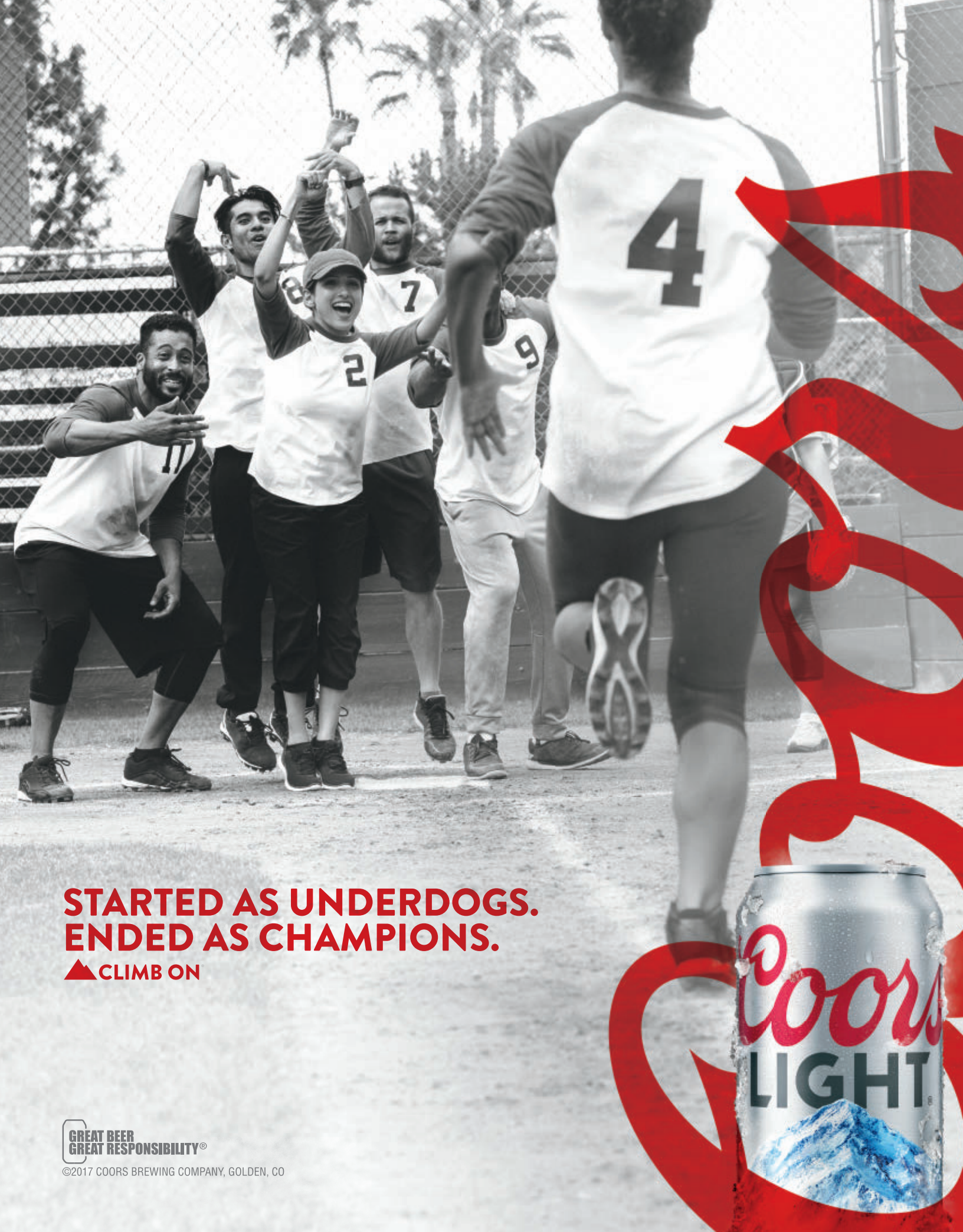
Perhaps the person who best understands Dixon's reluctance to trumpet his growing place in IndyCar history is the guy watching the New Zealander creep up on his own win tally. Andretti, now a team owner, says that while he was racing, he didn't pay much attention to those kinds of numbers either.

"I didn't really think about it," he says. "When it got later into my career, and got to 30 wins, and I started passing the Unsters and Mears and all those guys, I'm like, 'Wow, I never even thought about that going into it.' So that's when the numbers started coming into it, but even then it was more about the people I'm passing on the win list, not the number itself.

"Starting out, my goal was winning as many races as I could, but not because I was chasing any targets. I didn't really think about championships, or types of races. So finishing third all-time [on the win list] wasn't too bad when you consider the history, and the guys that were ahead of me [A.J. Foyt and Andretti's father, Mario]. I'm pretty proud of what I was able to do."

But while the numbers aren't a focal point for Dixon himself, he draws upon a deep well of motivation from elsewhere to maintain his place among IndyCar's elite.

"It comes down to, one, being competitive and, two, loving what you >



**STARTED AS UNDERDOGS.
ENDED AS CHAMPIONS.**

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(MAIN) Michael Andretti and Scott Dixon's careers overlapped for several seasons. Dixon was in the field when Andretti scored his final CART win at Long Beach in 2002. (ABOVE RIGHT) Dixon's 39th win came at Phoenix early in 2016. The 40th was added later in the year at Watkins Glen.

Everything but the milk... Michael Andretti's 431 laps led in the Indy 500 are the most by a non-winner. Second in 1991 after dueling with Rick Mears (RIGHT) is his best finish as a driver.



do," he says. "I feel very lucky to be able to wake up and race cars as a career. It's very hard to find that in life, and when you look back at how you got there, and the different avenues and windows and doors that opened up at the right point... you feel like you don't want to give up, because you don't want to lose doing what you love the most.

"But your motivation also changes quite a bit, too. In my career there have been big changes with the formula of the car, and I think that keeps you on your toes. Probably in Michael's era there was even more difference, but that definitely spices it up."

There are plenty of potential tripwires when trying to make comparisons across different eras, and the Dixon/Andretti question is no different. The current cars are relentlessly reliable, but the field is extremely deep in talent, and many of Dixon's wins have come in cars based



SPRINT GLOBE/ISTAT

Could those lost opportunities have been enough for Michael to bridge the 10-race gap that stands between himself and his father Mario, who sits second on the all-time list with 52? We'll never know. But Andretti has been out of the cockpit for over a decade now, and says that hindsight has given him a greater appreciation for the place he's earned for himself in IndyCar history.

"Now, I do think the numbers matter," he says. "But, as I've said, it's only when you see the people you're passing on the list that you start to get that appreciation."

For Dixon though, retrospection is a luxury that will have to wait until sometime in the future.

"I've never really been one to listen much to how others perceive what you've done, whether it's wrong or right," he says. "If I think I've given it 100 percent, yet only finished sixth on that day, as long as I felt like I gave it my all, that means more to me. And those days where you *didn't* give it 100 percent, where you left something on the table and it cost you, those are the ones you remember the most, that drive you in those same situations later on.

"Stats are something you look back on later, and you hope you're satisfied with them," he adds. "But right now as a team, we've got more to do. We can always win more races, we can always win more championships. We can win more Indy 500s, for sure. There's always something more to prove." 📍

“STATS ARE SOMETHING YOU LOOK BACK ON LATER, AND YOU HOPE YOU'RE HAPPY WITH THEM”

SCOTT DIXON

around a lot of standardized equipment.

On the flipside, Andretti's era afforded more opportunity for teams to find an advantage in different engines, chassis and tires, but that freedom often came at the cost of mechanical problems.

"I really envy Scott's era because of reliability," says Andretti. "If you look at my career, there are probably as many wins that I gave away as races that I won. And I can say that's even moreso about my Dad. So that could be frustrating.

"In my era, I enjoyed that we were able to try different things. But it sucked when you were on the wrong end of it - and there was a good five years where I had the wrong tire, or the wrong engine, so it balances it out."

THE LEGENDS LIST

ALL-TIME RACE WINNERS



1 A.J. FOYT
67 WINS

"Super Tex" can count four Indianapolis 500 victories, in 1961, '64, '67 and '77, among his table-topping tally.



2 MARIO ANDRETTI
52

Mario's total comes despite concentrating on Formula 1 (and winning the '78 title) in the second half of the 1970s.



3 MICHAEL ANDRETTI
42

Winning nine of 18 CART races in 1991 with Newman/Haas is the pinnacle of a stellar driving career.



4 SCOTT DIXON
40

...and counting. Two more wins for Dixon and he's top-three in the all-time list. Aged 36, could he pass Mario, too?



5 AL UNSER, SR.
39

Like Foyt, "Big Al" includes a quartet of Indy 500 wins in his victory résumé.



6= SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS
35

Near unbeatable in Champ Car in the mid 2000s, Bourdais is an IndyCar Series race winner, too

6= BOBBY UNSER
35

Al's hard-charging older brother owns three Indy 500 wins and two USAC National Championships.



8 AL UNSER, JR.
34

"Little Al" adds two more Indianapolis 500 wins to the Unser clan's amazing total.



9= PAUL TRACY
31

Always a factor in a 17-season CART/Champ Car career, the spectacular Canadian took the 2003 title with seven wins.

9= DARIO FRANCHITTI
31

Three Indy 500 wins and four championships for IndyCar's benchmark during the late 2000s.



11= RICK MEARS
29

Best known for his record-equaling four Indy wins and record-breaking six poles, but a triple CART champ, too.

11= HELIO CASTRONEVES
29

The guy most likely to join the Indy 500's four-time winners' club, but a potent road racer, too.



11= WILL POWER
29

A threat on road courses, streets, and ovals, the Aussie is set to climb the list.

Drivers in RED are still active in the Verizon IndyCar Series

CLASS OF 2017 DRIVING AMBITIONS

Fighting for championships, winning races, or just showing the world you've got what it takes. Everybody's got something to prove in the Verizon IndyCar Series - the fastest, most versatile racing on the planet.

WORDS Mark Glendenning DRIVER PORTRAITS Michael Levitt/LAT

LEADING FROM THE FRONT

Simon Pagenaud's 2016 Verizon IndyCar Series championship was won from the front. The Team Penske driver led laps in 12 of the 16 races and took home a season-high five wins, including his dominant, title-clinching victory at the Sonoma season finale (BELOW).



1

SIMON PAGENAUD

TEAM PENSKE



NEWLY-CROWNED KING

If Simon Pagenaud felt that he needed to prove a point after a quiet start with Team Penske in 2015, then mission accomplished. The Frenchman was in a class of his own for much of last year, and sealed the championship with a commanding display in the season finale at Sonoma. He returns this year with renewed confidence and the comfort of knowing that every member of the crew that worked on his car last year is back this time around. The target? Back-to-back titles.



Average finishing position for Verizon IndyCar Series drivers on "Dancing With The Stars"? A mighty 1.5, thanks to "Hinch" taking second in 2016 (RIGHT) and Helio Castroneves winning in '07.



98

ALEXANDER ROSSI

ANDRETTI HERTA AUTOSPORT WITH CURB-AGAJANIAN



BRICKYARD ROYALTY

Rossi's deal to move from Formula 1 into IndyCar full-time came together at the 11th hour last year. Three months later, he won the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500. With a season's worth of experience under his belt he's better prepared this time around, and the merger between Bryan Herta Autosport and Andretti Autosport has clicked seamlessly, too. Combined, it all points to 2017 being a season of real progress for Rossi.

5

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE

SCHMIDT PETERSON MOTORSPORTS



MAYOR WITH A MISSION

Hinchcliffe was on the wrong end of the closest finish in Texas Motor Speedway history last year, losing out to Graham Rahal by just 0.008sec. While that victory ultimately escaped him, the Canadian still earned himself a highlight reel moment by claiming pole for the Indy 500. But it's nearly two years since his last visit to Victory Lane, and while that's due in part to his being sidelined for six months by injury, there are no prizes for guessing what he's aiming for this season.

25

THE NUMBER OF MAXIMUM 10 SCORES EARNED BY "HINCH" ON "DANCING WITH THE STARS" IN 2016

ZERO

THE SUM TOTAL OF ROSSI'S INDIANAPOLIS 500 STARTS BEFORE WINNING THE 100TH RUNNING. QUITE A DEBUT!



THE NEXT 39 SECONDS...

DON'T EVEN BREATHE

There's a lot more to a perfect lap of Indy than simply trimming the wings and turning up the boost - both in preparing a racecar to dance on a knife-edge, and in mental commitment.

The easier something looks, the harder it usually is. When a Verizon IndyCar Series driver gets a qualifying run right at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the car looks like it's on rails, tracing smooth, fast, inch-perfect arcs.

But getting a racecar - and for that matter, a driver - to the point where that's possible is quite a process. Ed Carpenter has started from the pole at Indy twice, and he says that the foundation for a 230mph, 39-second lap of the Brickyard is laid long before Pole Day.

"For me, it starts with the preparation toward believing in the car and where it's at," he says. "To go out and do a lap - or a four-lap qualifying run - at 230mph, everything has to be pretty much spot-on. You've got to be committed to it beforehand and have the confidence that the car is going to be there, so it all starts long before the actual run; it starts in the practice runs. You spend days working up to it, getting the balance right, ensuring you've run in enough conditions and wind directions that you know what the car's going to do."

Even with a perfect car, running at 230mph asks a lot of the driver. Before the visor even goes down, Carpenter says that he makes a mental switch to prepare himself for what's ahead.

"It doesn't take much to be off for you to lose a lot of time, so you've got to be committed to being flat," he says. "You've got to go into it with the mindset of, 'I'm not going to lift; I'm going to hold it down and trust that the car is going to be there.'"

All this rings familiar to three-time Indy 500 winner Helio Castroneves.



F. Pearce Williams/LAT

"YOU'VE GOT TO GO INTO IT WITH THE MINDSET OF, 'I'M GOING TO HOLD IT COMPLETELY FLAT'"

ED CARPENTER



PHILIP ABBOTT/LAT

"You do a little bit of a practice before it, so you have a pretty good idea of what the car can do, but after that it's just commitment," says the Team Penske star.

"A lot of the time you've just got to feel the car as you're warming up and think, 'OK, this is what it's going to be'. But it's always tough to go into Turn 1 for the first time flat-out. You definitely don't breathe! You are just so focused on making that corner. And depending on what your car's like that day, you might also close one eye, just to make sure you're aiming for exactly the right spot. To be on that knife-edge is incredible. But you really have to trust what the car is going to do...and then you hope for the best."

Doing one perfect lap is hard enough, but the Indy 500 qualifying format demands that the drivers do four in succession - a job made exponentially harder by factors like tire degradation. That, Carpenter says, is where the driver can really make a difference.

"Everything's exaggerated when you're going that fast," he says. "Your turn-in points; how quick you turn in; your apex points. It's all magnified relative to a race run, where you have a little bit more of a margin. In a race, if you miss a turn-in, you can recover. But in qualifying, if you miss any of your marks you'll generally have to lift, because you'll be off your line."

Remember all that when you're watching Indy 500 qualifying in May. What looks like a car driving in an effortless circle is a machine on the very edge of control, just as they'd planned it. Maybe the driver even has one eye closed... ☹

232.672mph

They don't call it "Fast Friday" for nothing. Will Power's 38.681sec lap of Indy, set the day before qualifying began, was the **single fastest lap** posted at the Brickyard during 2016.



Few moments in racing require more precision than this: mid-turn at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, nudging 230mph - and *inch*-perfect. Ed Carpenter (MAIN and TOP LEFT) and Helio Castroneves (BOTTOM LEFT) are both masters of walking that tightrope.



MASTER OF AN INDY ART

Rick Mears stands unmatched as the Indianapolis 500's king of qualifying, with his six poles still the all-time high. That's in addition to his four victories, of course - a distinction shared by A.J. Foyt and Al Unser.

Helio Castroneves' dream of joining that four-time winners' club has been part of modern Indy folklore ever since he clocked win number three in 2009, but the Brazilian's four Indy poles also put him within sight of catching Mears on that front.

And at just 35 years old, two-time Indy polesitter Ed Carpenter has time to chip away at Mears' tally, too.

12

WILL
POWER

TEAM PENSKE



FIGHTING FIT

Penske's perennial contender missed the opening race of 2016 due to an illness, yet still managed to fight back and emerge as teammate Simon Pagenaud's main title threat. He's a reliable contender every time his car rolls off the hauler, and hasn't finished lower than fourth in the final points since 2009. There's no reason to expect him to be anywhere other than up at the front and fighting for his second series championship again in 2017.



HOTTEST OF
HOT STREAKS

In a six-race stretch from the street's of Detroit's Belle Isle to the 2.5-mile Pocono Raceway (BELOW), Will Power put together a streak of results that turned his 2016 season around. Four wins and two second-place finishes in a championship as competitive as the Verizon IndyCar Series? That's an incredible run by the Aussie.



29%
COMING INTO 2017,
POWER'S STARTED FROM
THE POLE FOR ALMOST
A THIRD OF HIS
INDYCAR RACES

18

SEBASTIEN
BOURDAIS

DALE COYNE RACING



GETTING THE BAND BACK TOGETHER

There's a family reunion of sorts at Dale Coyne Racing this year, and Bourdais is right at the center of it. His return to DCR reunites him with the team that brought him back from Europe after his spell in F1, and he'll be rekindling old relationships with engineers Craig Hampson and Olivier Boisson. Coyne has invested heavily in the 2017 program, and Bourdais stands poised to capitalize.



Sam Hornish Jr. was the last American driver to win an IndyCar Series title with Roger Penske, back in 2006 (RIGHT). Can new signing **Josef Newgarden** repeat the feat in 2017?



8

MAX CHILTON

CHIP GANASSI RACING



PLANTING A FLAG

Ex-Formula 1 racer Chilton isn't the first driver to face the steep learning curve involved in transitioning from European racing to the Verizon IndyCar Series, but results like his sixth place at Phoenix last year gave a glimpse of his potential. A season's worth of experience with Chip Ganassi Racing and the familiarity with the tracks that he gained last year will help provide a solid foundation for Chilton to build from in his sophomore campaign.



2

JOSEF NEWGARDEN

TEAM PENSKE



TIME FOR THE BRIGHT LIGHTS

After several years of giant-killing performances with the smaller SFHR and ECR teams, Newgarden responded to months of speculation that he'd join Penske...by joining Penske. One of the strongest young drivers in the championship is now with one of the strongest teams, and there's every chance that 2017 could mark the beginning of a winning Newgarden/Team Penske partnership that lasts for the next decade.



4

CONOR DALY

AJ FOYT RACING



DALY DRIVER

AJ Foyt Racing is the team that gave second-generation racer Daly his debut at Indy in 2013, and it's to Foyt that the 25-year-old driver returns for his second full season in the series. His rookie year with Dale Coyne Racing delivered good results at Detroit and Watkins Glen, and the move to a revitalized Foyt operation should provide the perfect environment for Daly to continue refining his craft.



21

JR HILDEBRAND

ED CARPENTER RACING



PERSISTENCE REWARDED

Hildebrand makes a welcome full-time return to IndyCar in 2017 for what will be his first full season since 2012. He is already well integrated with the Ed Carpenter Racing team, having flown the ECR flag in a third car at the Indy 500 for the past three years. All of those Indy appearances resulted in top 10s, but Hildebrand will be equally keen to show his impressive chops on road and street courses.





THE NEXT 200 YARDS

THE ART OF THE PASS

Passes on road courses are over in an instant - but making them work often requires a meticulous plan.

The art of passing on a road or street course has to be a part of every Verizon IndyCar Series driver's toolkit. That said, some do it better than others - and Will Power does it better than most.

The success of any passing attempt is ultimately decided in the final 200 yards before the apex, but Team Penske driver Power explains that building up to the moment of truth can take several laps.

"I kind of sit there and study people for a while, just watching them," says the 2014 series champion. "And I even hang

back some, so they don't know what I've got, but I can still get an understanding of where I might be stronger than them.

"Usually you'll decide the lap before, 'OK, next lap I'm lining him up, and I'm getting everything ready and going for it.' But sometimes you've got to think on your feet, and it's not even a planned thing - especially on restarts, where you've just got to be ready for whatever might happen.

"But generally, you know at the start of the lap that you're going to have a go. Over the previous laps you've worked

out, 'Alright, I've got this run.' And then you're hitting the [push-to-pass] button."

A lot of things have to go right if a driver is going to enter a turn trailing another car, but exit ahead of it. The current-gen IndyCar Series racecar helps eliminate some of the variables by virtue of its design: one side effect of the safety devices built in to help prevent cars from launching over each other in accidents is that drivers are further emboldened to try a passing move.

"With this car, overtaking is pretty

2.5g

As in, **two-and-a-half times** the force of gravity when an IndyCar driver slams the anchors on. At road courses with multiple heavy-braking points, that could be **250-plus** times every race.



(LEFT) The current generation of IndyCars are designed to prevent wheels from interlocking. That makes them safer, but also makes it easier for a driver to pull off a successful overtaking maneuver on the car ahead of them. (BELOW) Get it all right and it could be your day to celebrate.



Michael Levitz/LAT

THE HUNTER AND HUNTED

Overtaking is a game of inches played between two cars at 200mph - and that's when things are easy. Often, though, the driver trying to find their way past a car ahead also has to keep an eye on who is coming up behind.

"That makes it hard," Power concedes. "You have to decide, 'Am I more in a situation where I don't want to lose a position [than try to gain one]?' Those situations can be stressful - you've got a couple of guys on you; you've got a guy struggling in front of you, and it's important to pass that car in front to make your strategy work..."

good, because you can't interlock wheels anymore," Power says. "So if there is a gap, even if you go a little bit too deep, there's a pretty good chance that you're going to get them."

But that also means that the driver ahead is even more wary of an attack. So the key, says Power, is making sure that his rival doesn't recognize the threat until it's too late.

"You've got to make sure the move sticks the first time," he says. "Once the other guy knows what you're doing, you

"YOU'VE GOT TO MAKE SURE THE MOVE STICKS THE FIRST TIME. IT'S GOT TO BE A SURPRISE"

WILL POWER

have less chance of getting past him. So it's got to be a surprise."

Even if the driver giving chase blows his cover, there's still the option of trying to force the car ahead into a mistake. This is especially effective if

your target is struggling with a problem like tire degradation, although Power says that it's a tactic he rarely uses.

"I don't do that very often," he says. "But if the guy ahead is struggling, you'll often see mistakes creeping in. At a lot of tracks there are only so many corners you can block for, so you get offline a few times, the pressure builds... but sometimes you also roast your tires trying to get past the other car and end up stuck there behind them. It's always such a fine balance." ●

28

RYAN
HUNTER-REAY

ANDRETTI AUTOSPORT



READY TO REBOUND

Last season was a rare winless one for Hunter-Reay - a blip due at least in part to Andretti Autosport's broader struggles to unlock the secrets of the Honda technical package. The team says that it has made significant progress over the winter, and nobody will be more eager than the 2012 series champion and 2014 Indy 500 winner to put that improved pace to the test.



250

...OUT OF A POSSIBLE 250 LAPS LED BY HUNTER-REAY TO WIN AT THE MILWAUKEE MILE IN A 2004 CHAMP CAR RACE.

CHAMPIONS' WINTER WARMUP

Ryan Hunter-Reay (BELOW) was one of seven Verizon IndyCar Series regulars taking part in the 2017 Race of Champions in Miami. RoC pitches racers from multiple series, driving several different cars, in head-to-head competition on a purpose-built stadium track. It's a great way to get dialed in for IndyCar's versatile schedule.



3

HELIO
CASTRONEVES

TEAM PENSKE



SPEED SPRINGS ETERNAL

The effervescent Brazilian has been pointing, winking, fence climbing and making various excited gestures with his hands for two decades now. Yet, at 41 years of age, he remains one of the most reliably fast and consistent guys in the Verizon IndyCar Series field. And with that elusive first series championship and record-equaling fourth Indianapolis 500 win to fight for, there's no question that the fire still burns as bright as ever.



Mazda's Road to Indy ladder keeps on delivering. 2016 Indy Lights champion Ed Jones (RIGHT) is the sixth consecutive title winner to make the jump to a Verizon IndyCar Series drive.



9

SCOTT DIXON

CHIP GANASSI RACING



ONE FOR THE BOOKS

Dixon is already assured of his place among IndyCar's all-time greats, and there's plenty of scope for his footprint on the sport's history to grow even greater. He already has four titles, plus an Indy 500 win, and is just two victories shy of catching Michael Andretti for third on the all-time list. Even with Ganassi needing to settle into its switch back to Honda this year, it's entirely conceivable that the driver rated by many as the best in the field will build upon those numbers in 2017.

26

TAKUMA SATO

ANDRETTI AUTOSPORT



SCENERY CHANGE

Sato provided a few highlight reel moments during his four seasons with AJ Foyt Racing, including his memorable win at Long Beach in 2013. This year, he moves into a very different environment as part of Andretti Autosport's four-car assault. All of his best finishes with Foyt came on road and street courses, but when you factor in that he also nearly won the 2012 Indy 500, it's clear that he can be a threat anywhere when he has a good car underneath him.

19

ED JONES

DALE COYNE RACING



PROMOTION MATERIAL

The Dubai-based Brit is the latest in a long line of Mazda Road to Indy stars to race his way into the big game. Armed with the scholarship he earned by winning last year's Indy Lights title, Jones heads into his rookie year in the Verizon IndyCar Series with an experienced and winning teammate in Sebastien Bourdais to learn from, and a reinforced Dale Coyne Racing preparing his car.

14

CARLOS MUNOZ

AJ FOYT RACING



BENEATH THE RADAR

Munoz moved in the opposite direction to Sato during the winter, trading his place at Andretti for one with Foyt. And in the 25-year-old, A.J.'s team has landed a fast, understated youngster with a ton of potential. He's already a recognized threat every time he turns up at Indy, and he also has a street course win on his résumé. But even at his young age he's the more experienced of the Foyt pairing, so it will be interesting to watch how he grows into his de facto leadership role.





Ryan Hunter-Reay was crowned Verizon IndyCar Series champion in 2012 (RIGHT). Two years later, the American racer added victory in the 98th Indianapolis 500 to his résumé.



THE NEXT THOUGHT

ONE-TRACK MINDS

All drivers will experience an emotional rollercoaster of ups and downs while racing in the Verizon IndyCar Series. But what matters is how they ride it.

For every Verizon IndyCar Series driver, the rapid-fire pace of the season essentially breaks down into a series of highs and lows, interspersed with a whirl of airports, rental cars and hotels. There's not a lot of time to celebrate a win, nor to rebound from a particularly galling defeat.

That whirlwind is especially intense for the winner of the Indy 500. IndyCar is unique among sports in that its "Super Bowl" takes place mid season, so what

"WITH EXPERIENCE COMES AN ABILITY TO COMPARTMENTALIZE THOSE UPS AND THOSE DOWNS"

RYAN HUNTER-REAY

should be the chance to savor victory is instead a daze of PR obligations, followed five days later by the opening practice session for a double-header on the streets of Detroit's Belle Isle.

"I don't think you can liken anything in sports to coming off an Indy 500 win, and that week of PR activities and media that leads straight into the Detroit double-race weekend," says 2014 Indy 500 winner Ryan Hunter-Reay. "I'm not sure anything can really prepare you for it. You take it as it comes, try and bank the experiences, and hopefully get to savor it down the line.

"Experience does help a lot with these things - not just the Indy/Detroit situation, but generally speaking. Week to week, racing can be brutal. You can have the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. With experience comes an ability to compartmentalize those ups and those downs, and keep a level head so you can give your best week in and week out."

Most drivers will tell you that they have racing on the brain 24/7, but while it's important to celebrate the good results and reflect upon the bad, it's also critical to know when to hit the reset button and switch focus to the next weekend.



Shawn Gatzman/Photo

Winning a championship allows for an off-season to savor and reflect, but winning the Indy 500 means a week of wall-to-wall PR before getting back behind the wheel at Detroit. Ryan Hunter-Reay (LEFT) has experienced both.

A driver's ability to manage the highs and lows through the course of a typical season is perhaps one of the most underrated skills in the paddock. But for the ones who get it right, it can also be one of the secret weapons that separates the best of the best from the rest.

Dale Coyne Racing's Sebastien Bourdais is yet to taste success at Indy, but he's a 35-time race winner in top-level open-wheel competition and a four-time Champ Car champion who's also experienced his share of disappointments. From his standpoint, it's important to keep wins in context, but his approach to rebounding from a bad weekend depends on what caused things to go wrong in the first place.

"You celebrate a win," says the Frenchman, "but Monday morning, you're back at it, analyzing what you did wrong during the weekend, and how you're going to improve.

"As for a loss...I only get mad when it's my fault. If something just didn't work out in a race, OK, let's learn from it and move on. I have no problem with that.

"But the ones where I made mistakes, those are the ones I struggle to get over. I usually won't be very cheerful until I get back in the car at the next race..."



Chris Owens/MS Photo

WINNERS NEVER STAND STILL

Sebastien Bourdais took 31 wins from just 73 starts in Champ Car. He's had to work harder to find Victory Lane in the Verizon IndyCar Series (the latest in Detroit last year, ABOVE), but says every win is equally hard-earned and precious.

"In order to remain on top, the mentality has to be to keep your head down and to keep working," he says. "It's always about what comes next. The next race. If you get to the top and then wait for the competition to pass you, it's going to happen sooner rather than later. Nobody stands still in racing - or at least, nobody who wins."

15

GRAHAM RAHAL

RAHAL LETTERMAN
LANIGAN RACING



HONDA'S HERO

Chevrolet has generally had an edge over rival Honda in the manufacturer war over the past couple of seasons, but you wouldn't know it to look at Rahal's results: he's finished top five in the championship for the past two years as Honda's top scorer. The RLL team has found the sweet spot in the Honda package, and Rahal is at the top of his game as a driver. There's every reason to expect the No.15 to be mixing it up at the front again in 2017.



0.008

...OF A SECOND. RAHAL'S MARGIN OF VICTORY IN ANOTHER INCREDIBLE TEXAS MOTOR SPEEDWAY FINISH IN 2016

ANOTHER
MINI ADVENTURE

Like many Verizon IndyCar Series drivers, Graham Rahal loves his street cars. He collects them, he trades them, he cherishes them. But do they come any cooler than the 1964 Mini Cooper (BELOW) that Rahal painstakingly restored from the ground up? "The Mini is my baby," he enthuses. "It will be with me forever."



10

TONY KANAAN

CHIP GANASSI RACING



SUSTAINED PERFORMANCE

Q: Why do guys in their 40s like Tony Kanaan keep getting plum drives such as Chip Ganassi Racing's No. 10 entry? A: Because they deliver. And while Kanaan didn't manage a victory last year, he was so consistent that he still finished just behind teammate and two-time 2016 race winner Scott Dixon in the points. Ganassi's switch to Honda this year will provide a fresh challenge, but that's what keeps a driver young, isn't it...?



Can you even remember open-wheel racing before **Tony Kanaan**? The Brazilian ironman took his first big league win at a Michigan International Speedway CART race (RIGHT) way back in **1999**.



27

MARCO ANDRETTI

ANDRETTI AUTOSPORT



REDEMPTION SONG

History shows us that Andretti Autosport finished 1-2 at Indy last year, courtesy of Alexander Rossi and Carlos Munoz. But until a botched final pitstop, Marco Andretti was in the mix as well. Later, he admitted that the disappointment of dropping down to 13th colored the rest of his season, so he will be more keen than just about anyone to start with a clean slate and put things right in 2017.

83

CHARLIE KIMBALL

CHIP GANASSI RACING



JOINING THE ESTABLISHMENT

Kimball has outgrown his "rising star" tag and has matured into a third source of experience and knowledge for Ganassi to draw upon alongside Dixon and Kanaan - and at 31 years old, he has plenty of time to keep building upon it. He was one of the most consistent drivers in the field last year with 11 top-10 finishes, and is still hungry to add to his maiden win at Mid-Ohio in 2013.

7

MIKHAIL ALESHIN

SCHMIDT PETERSON MOTORSPORTS



FAST AND FEARLESS

The Russian returned to the Verizon IndyCar Series last season after missing virtually all of the previous year following his huge accident on the Fontana oval in 2014. His pole and second place at another speedway, Pocono, was the highlight of his comeback year, and the continuity that he carries into 2017 could provide the foundation for more excitement and results in the year ahead.

20

ED CARPENTER / SPENCER PIGOT

ED CARPENTER RACING



DOUBLE ACT

IndyCar's only owner/driver Ed Carpenter reprises his role as an oval hotshot once again in 2017, while talented youngster Spencer Pigot impressed enough in his seven appearances with the team last year to get the keys to the car for the road/street course events on a full-time basis this time around. Both are capable of big results in their respective disciplines.





For the latest from Indy Lights, check out indylights.com

THE NEXT...NEXT

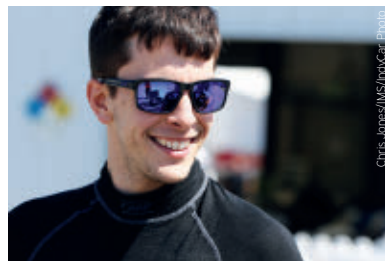
STEPPING IT UP

Whether it's Santiago Urrutia's quest for redemption or Colton Herta's aim to add to a family legacy, Indy Lights is rich with subplots in 2017.

Santiago Urrutia doesn't need to dig too deep in search of motivation this year. The Argentinean driver heads into his second Indy Lights Presented by Cooper Tires season chasing the same giant carrot as his rivals: the scholarship toward a Verizon IndyCar Series drive that's awarded to the champion.

He'll be reminded of what's at stake every time he looks at the track during an IndyCar session and sees 2016 Lights champ Ed Jones drive past in the No. 19 Dale Coyne Racing entry. If it's a road or street race, he'll also spot Spencer Pigot in the No. 20 Ed Carpenter Racing car. For a young driver on the edge of the big time, there's no prize in racing more valuable.

But for Urrutia, the lure is even



Chris Jones/MS/IndyCar Photo

stronger. Jones won last year's championship on the final lap of the final race - and Urrutia had the unfortunate distinction of being on the other side of that equation. He's moved from Schmidt Peterson Motorsports to Belardi for the upcoming season, and says that his aims

for 2017 are very simple.

"I have only one goal, and that is to win the championship, and I'm going to try to win every race for the team," he says. "If I can't win, I'll be aiming for seconds and thirds - whatever I need to win the title. What happened at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in the finale is now in the past, and I'm looking at the future."

But it takes more than fighting words to win a championship, and Urrutia is acutely aware that he's in for a battle. Two-time 2016 race winner Kyle Kaiser will be returning with Juncos, while the rookie ranks include 2015 USF2000 champion Nico Jamin, Pro Mazda champion Aaron Telitz, and second-generation racer Colton Herta.

Santiago Urrutia (LEFT and ABOVE, No. 55) was right in the Indy Lights hunt last year and will be bang in the thick of it again in 2017 - although he'll have a crop of fast rookies, such as Colton Herta (ABOVE RIGHT), to contend with.

Mazda Road to Indy is a three-step ladder taking drivers all the way to the Verizon IndyCar Series. You can follow them on their journeys to the top by checking out roadtoindy.tv.



For the latest from Pro Mazda, check out promazda.com

PREPARING TO RESET

Pro Mazda's current Elan chassis will make a farewell tour this year ahead of the arrival of the new Tatuus PM-18 in 2018.

Pro Mazda Presented by Cooper Tires enters a period of transition in 2017, with the venerable Elan chassis preparing for its final season before making way for the brand-new Tatuus PM-18 next year.

The arrival of the PM-18 will complete a four-year facelift of the entire Mazda Road to Indy ladder, following on from 2015's debut of the new IL-15 Indy Lights car, and this year's rollout of the USF-17 USF2000 chassis. (Pay especially close attention to that if you're looking for a sneak peak into Pro Mazda's future - the core of the new USF2000 car is fundamentally the same.)

But while much of the Pro Mazda talk is of tomorrow, there are plenty of reasons to pay attention to what's going on in 2017. Topping that list is the expanded incentive program that Andersen Promotions has announced for the coming season. The prize remains the same - a scholarship to help the series

champion move up the ladder into Indy Lights - but the value of that scholarship has been increased from \$590,300 to \$790,300 for the coming year. The pole award has also received a bump to \$1,500 per race, and the top three in the championship at the end of the year will earn a one-day test in a Lights car. There's also a new Mazda street car of choice for the Rookie of the Year.

The barrier of entry will also be lower for drivers. The series has trimmed this year's schedule to 14 races across six weekends, a move that should translate into a reduction in race budgets.

About the only thing that won't change? The depth of talent up front, with a talented crop of rookies including reigning USF2000 champion Anthony Martin and karting star Sting Ray Robb. This year will be the current car's swansong, but it's certainly going to get a heck of a sendoff.



Chris Jones/IndyCar/MSS Photo

The latter, who will turn 17 just two weeks after the season-opener at St. Petersburg, has spent the past couple of years racing in the UK, and will compete in a team jointly run by Andretti Autosport and the Steinbrenner family. The Steinbrenner name is a new one to motorsports, but it's a very different story in baseball - they own the Yankees.

"IndyCar is my goal, so competing in Indy Lights this year will bring me one step closer," says Herta, who will run with the same No. 98 that 2016 Indy 500 winner Alexander Rossi sports for his father Bryan's team in the IndyCar Series.

"I know I have a good team behind me in Andretti Steinbrenner Racing, and we should be fighting for wins right away."



The new Tatuus PM-18 Pro Mazda car will complete a four-year re-boot across the entire MRTI.

Chris Owens/MSS Photo



COOPER TIRES
USF2000
POWERED BY MAZDA

For the latest from the USF2000 championship, go to usf2000.com

Team Pelfrey's Robert Megennis was one of many drivers to put the new Tatuus USF-17 through its paces during pre-season testing.

Chris Jones/IndyCar/MSP Photo

NEW CAR, BIG DREAMS

There's lots to like about 2017 USF2000 - and that's before you even factor in the new car.

Cooper Tires USF2000 Powered by Mazda's brand-new Tatuus USF-17 car breaks cover for the 2017 season, and there's already a long line of future IndyCar stars eager to take it into battle.

"I am loving the new car," said Team Pelfrey's Robert Megennis after testing it on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway road course late last year. "You have the paddle shifts, bigger tires, bigger brakes - it's just overall more fun to drive. It's nicer to be in - it's bigger and it's cooler looking. The racing is going to be great. We have a lot less aero [than the previous car], so we'll be able to run closer together. It should be tons of fun."

Megennis, who was 2016's USF2000 rookie of the year, heads into the new season with experience under his belt and the familiarity that comes with staying with the same team. And any advantage will be especially helpful this year, because he'll be racing against a deeply talented field of drivers who are all just as keen to win the scholarship to move up the ladder into Pro Mazda for 2018.

Among them will be his Pelfrey



Chris Owens/MSP Photo



Media/Al M. Padron

FIRST STEP ON THE LADDER

Oliver Askew beat an international field to win the inaugural MRTI Scholarship Shootout - and a 2017 USF2000 drive.

teammate Ayla Agren, who returns to the series - and to Pelfrey - for a second campaign after previously competing in 2015. And there will also be a few names familiar to Megennis from last year, including Dakota Dickerson, who moves from Afterburner Motorsport to Newman-Wachs Racing, plus rapid Canadian Parker Thompson.

The latter, perhaps more than anyone in the field, will feel that he has a point to prove. In 2016 he earned four wins and nine podiums with Cape Motorsports/Wayne Taylor Racing, but narrowly lost the championship to teammate Anthony Martin. This year he'll be racing with new Canadian team Exclusive Autosport, and he'll have just one objective in mind.

"This is a dream fit," he says. "You could definitely say that I have some unfinished business to take care of, and I couldn't be prouder to represent EA Autosport while I do it."

Taken as a whole, it's a good thing that the new USF2000 car is expected to race so well. With so much ambition and talent in this year's field, it's going to need to. ●

Canadian hotshoe Parker Thompson (LEFT) has some unfinished business after narrowly missing out on the 2016 USF2000 title.



THIS WAY TO THE TOP... THE 2017 MAZDA ROAD TO INDY SCHEDULE



Indy Lights Presented by Cooper Tires

March 11/12	St. Petersburg, Fla.
April 22/23	Barber Motorsports Park, Ala.
May 12/13	Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Ind.
May 26	Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Ind.
June 24/25	Road America, Wis.
July 9	Iowa Speedway, Iowa
July 15/16	Toronto, Ont.
July 29/30	Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, Ohio
Aug. 26	Gateway Motorsports Park, Ill.
Sept. 3	Watkins Glen International, N.Y.



Pro Mazda Presented by Cooper Tires

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June 24/25	Road America, Wis.
July 28/29/30	Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, Ohio
Aug. 26	Gateway Motorsports Park, Ill.
Sept. 2/3	Watkins Glen International, N.Y.



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Sept. 3	Watkins Glen International, N.Y.



Key Street Road Oval

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