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2007 INDY 500



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PREVIEW OF THE 91ST INDIANAPOLIS 500





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Mr. Soichiro Honda





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THE ULTIMATE PRIZE

To both winners and hopefuls, Indy is a special race; but it means something different to each driver or owner

PHOTO GALLERY
2006 Indy 500
highlights reel
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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, START YOUR ENGINES!

(Left) Sam Hornish Jr. heads down the short chute between Turns 1 and 2 on his way to winning the 2006 Indianapolis 500. (Right) Dan Wheldon gets ready for action at Homestead. He won there, and Kansas, too - can he win again at Indy?

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CAN DAN DO IT AGAIN?

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Dan Streck/LAT

WIDE-OPEN AT THE BRICKYARD

There are some clear favorites, of course, but this year's 500 hero could be almost any of the 33

Given his performance so far this year, Dan Wheldon has to be considered a favorite to win the 91st Indianapolis 500. He's won two of four races and led nearly 70 percent of the laps. With his win in Kansas, he certainly seems to have momentum heading into the month of May.

"In terms of creating momentum, I think you can create your own momentum because the month is so long," says Wheldon. "I think obviously, you know, Sam's [Hornish Jr.] had a disappointing – by his regards – start to the season. But I can guarantee you come race day at Indianapolis, he's going to be strong. You can create momentum."

In other words, Kansas is Kansas and Indy is Indy. Wheldon may have the best odds, but success at other tracks doesn't necessarily equate to being the first across the yard of bricks after 500 miles of hard racing.

However, picking favorites is a national pastime, so here are 11 drivers (that's a third of the field) to keep an eye on at Indianapolis. Wheldon, naturally, leads the list.

Dan Wheldon ★★★★★★★

He's been crazy fast lately, especially on big ovals, and has led more than two-thirds of the laps in the first four races this season. Based on that and his performance in the previous two Indy 500s – he won in 2005, and led most of the race last year before a tire problem ended his race – he's the obvious choice.

Helio Castroneves ★★★★★★★

He always seems to be a factor at Indianapolis, even when he doesn't win the race. Everyone remembers his wins in 2001 and '02 and his runner-up finish to teammate Gil de Ferran in '03, but we seem to forget that, barring a crash last year, he's never finished outside the top 10 at Indy. A master of reading the race, could this be Castroneves' year again?

Sam Hornish Jr. ★★★★★★★

There's a certain headiness to his approach to Indy that belies his age. So Rick Mears-like in his approach, we forget that Hornish is still just 27 years old. Not only does he return to the race with the confidence of having won it last year, he also returns with the understanding that he has the ability and the tools to do it again. His perfect victory scenario? Lapping the field.

Scott Dixon ★★★★★★★

Everywhere Wheldon has gone, his Target Chip Ganassi Racing teammate has been right there. Perfect example: At Kansas, he was challenging Wheldon when he ran out of fuel and was forced to the pits, a sudden move that drew a penalty and cost him the race. He's got the speed; he just needs the other elements to fall into place to take a first Indy 500 win.

Tony Kanaan ★★★★★★★

He's shown the pace this season that had frustratingly eluded Andretti Green Racing in

2006, winning at Motegi and claiming the pole at Kansas. What's missing – and only on occasion – is the consistency of teamwork shown by Penske and Ganassi. In other words, AGR is making uncharacteristic mistakes, the kind that can't be made at Indy.

Dario Franchitti ★★★★★★★

The speed and the luck have returned to his game this year, and he's on a consistent roll heading into the Big One, having finished among the top five in the previous three IndyCar Series races. Indy has never been kind to Dario, but he has finished sixth and seventh in his last two efforts. If lady luck rides shotgun, this could be the breakthrough.

Michael Andretti ★★★★★★★

He admits that if he hadn't finished third last year and been in position to win late in the race, he probably wouldn't have decided to return to the driver's seat this year. But the truth is Michael Andretti – semi-retirement or not – is still a tenacious, smart racer, and he has the equipment and skill to sign off by writing a magnificent final chapter.

Marco Andretti ★★★★★★★

The only reason last year's runner-up is this far down on the list is the fact that he's endured some mysterious handling problems early in the 2007 season. He crashed in Japan and parked it in Kansas, so his stock has fallen

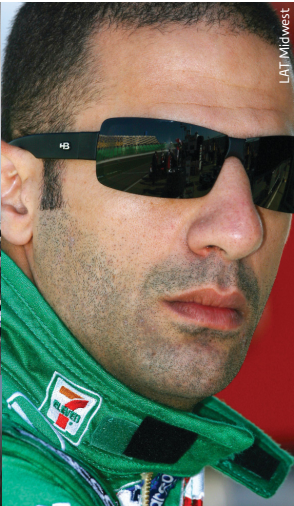
(Above) Eleven names in the frame... These are the names, but you can do the work for us and match them to the faces. Sam Hornish Jr., Dan Wheldon, Helio Castroneves; Danica Patrick, Dario Franchitti, Tony Kanaan, Marco and Michael Andretti, Scott Dixon, Vitor Meira and Tomas Scheckter. Did we leave anyone out?

VIDEO EXTRA

ACTION FROM THE 2006 INDY 500

WATCH THE 91ST INDY 500 ON ABC, SUNDAY MAY 27, NOON ET

LAT Midwest



Courtesy of IMS Productions



Michael Levitz/LAT

LATEST NEWS @
www.indycar.com

slightly. However, he's the best young driver in the field, and it's possible that, like last year, he'll find himself leading near the end.

Vitor Meira ★★★★★★★★

Like Marco, Vitor would be higher on the list if not for the troubles he and Panther Racing have endured so far this season. However, Meira has been consistent in his four previous Indy 500s – including his runner-up finish behind Wheldon in 2005 – and is likely to start well (he's been in the first four rows in each of the previous three races at the Brickyard).

Danica Patrick ★★★★★★★★

She's not exactly a longshot, but a victory would be surprising – and an amazing story. She makes the list because of her brief history in the event. In 2005, Patrick started the month with consistent speed and made sure she was among the leaders near the end. Last year wasn't quite as dramatic, but it was a dogged eighth-place run. She's been solid this year.

Tomas Scheckter ★★★★★★★★

At the Indy 500, it's all about being in the lead pack for that final shootout. After that, anything can happen. If the cards fall right for him in the early going, Vision Racing team leader Scheckter definitely has the tenacity to be part of the train with 20 laps to go. His hard-earned third-place finish in Kansas gives him added confidence heading to Indiana.

INDY PRO NEWS @
www.indycar.com

Last year's Freedom 100 came down to a dramatic duel between Jay Howard and eventual winner Wade Cunningham (left). Expect more fireworks in 2007

Sweet Freedom

A deep field of Indy Pro Series drivers will make the Freedom 100 a Carb Day classic

Almost matching the 33 starters for the main event, the Freedom 100 for the Indy Pro Series will still have a large field of hungry young drivers looking to prove themselves in front of huge crowds and the IndyCar Series team owners on Carb Day at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Like the Indianapolis 500, the Freedom 100 has a clear favorite – Alex Lloyd, who is three for three for Sam Schmidt this season and led the April 28 testing by topping 190mph. The only other driver to hit 190 was Wade Cunningham, who took the pole and victory in last year's Freedom 100.

However, there's a whole host of drivers who could come up with a surprise. Hideki Mutoh, second in the point standings, is second only to Lloyd in terms of consistency, with three top-five finishes for Panther Racing. He was third

quickest in testing. Chris Festa has been strong this year, scoring the pole at Homestead. Jaime Camara finished third in last year's Freedom 100 and has to be considered a contender as well.

In addition to Mutoh, several other rookies could provide a surprise. Matt Jaskol was quick in testing, as were Logan Gomez, Mike Potekhen, Ryan Justice and Andrew Prendeville.

The strong field should make for an exciting race, and this year's event will put this race well on its way to becoming a Carb Day classic.

91st Indianapolis 500 entry list

No.	Driver	Chassis	Team
2	Tomas Scheckter	Dallara	Vision Racing
3	Helio Castroneves (W)	Dallara	Team Penske
4	Vitor Meira	Dallara	Delphi Panther Racing
5	Sarah Fisher	Dallara	Dreyer & Reinbold Racing
6	Sam Hornish Jr. (W)	Dallara	Team Penske
7	Danica Patrick	Dallara	Andretti Green Racing
8	Scott Sharp	Dallara	Rahal Letterman Racing
9	Scott Dixon	Dallara	Target Chip Ganassi Racing
10	Dan Wheldon (W)	Dallara	Target Chip Ganassi Racing
11	Tony Kanaan	Dallara	Andretti Green Racing
12	Ryan Briscoe	Dallara	Luczo Dragon Racing
13	TBA	Panoz	Cabbie Motorsports
14	Darren Manning	Dallara	A.J. Foyt Enterprises
15	Buddy Rice (W)	Dallara	Dreyer & Reinbold Racing
16	TBA	Dallara	Panther Racing
17	Jeff Simmons	Dallara	Rahal Letterman Racing
18	TBA	Dallara	PDM Racing
19	Jon Herb	Dallara	Racing Professionals
20	Ed Carpenter	Dallara	Vision Racing
21	Jaques Lazier	Panoz	Playa Del Racing
22	A.J. Foyt IV	Dallara	Vision Racing
23	Milka Duno (R)	Dallara	SAMAX Motorsport
25	Marty Roth	Dallara	Roth Racing
26	Marco Andretti	Dallara	Andretti Green Racing
27	Dario Franchitti	Dallara	Andretti Green Racing
31	Phil Giebler (R)	Panoz	Playa Del Racing
39	Michael Andretti	Dallara	Andretti Green Racing
40	PJ Jones	Dallara	Team Leader/Dollander Racing
41	TBA	Dallara	A.J. Foyt Enterprises
43	TBA	Dallara	CURB/Agajanian/Beck Motorsports
50	Al Unser Jr. (W)	Dallara	A.J. Foyt Enterprises
55	Kosuke Matsuura	Dallara	Super Aguri Panther Racing
77	Stephan Gregoire	Panoz	Chastain Motorsports
91	TBA	Dallara	Hemelgarn Racing
98	TBA	Dallara	CURB/Agajanian/Beck Motorsports
99	Buddy Lazier (W)	Dallara	Sam Schmidt Motorsports
02	TBA	Dallara	Vision Racing
TBA	TBA	Dallara	Team Penske

W = former Indy 500 winner; R = rookie

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Quality and quantity for 91st Indy

Six 500 winners are among those chasing the Borg-Warner

Among the 38 entries for the 91st Indianapolis 500 are 13 IndyCar Series race winners and six 500 champions with eight wins total. Most of those come from the 2007 IndyCar Series regulars, all of whom are entered for the 500.

Helio Castroneves, Sam Hornish Jr., Buddy Lazier, Buddy Rice, Al Unser Jr. and Dan Wheldon are the former Indy 500 winners entered so far. Lazier, the 1996 winner, will drive for Indy Pro Series powerhouse Sam Schmidt Motorsports.

Two-time winner Unser will pilot one of A.J. Foyt Enterprises' entries.

They are just two of the many drivers whom IndyCar Series fans will recognize. Michael Andretti will step back into the cockpit – naturally, for Andretti Green Racing. Ryan Briscoe will run a car leased from Team Penske for Luczo Dragon Racing. PJ Jones will pay homage to his father's 1967 Indy run, when Parnelli Jones nearly won the 500 with "Silent Sam," Andy Granatelli's turbine-powered racer. PJ's Team Leader/

Dollander Racing Dallara will carry a similar bright orange paint scheme.

Other familiar faces include Jon Herb in his Racing Professionals machine; Stephan Gregoire reuniting with Chastain Motorsports; and Jaques Lazier at Playa Del Racing. As of press time, there are only two rookies in the field, Milka Duno and Phil Giebler. There are also several entries that have no named drivers yet, with those seats expected to be filled as the Month of May progresses.

All those who provided thrills at the 2006 Indianapolis 500 are back for another round

Milka Duno may be new to the series, but she's already very popular



Darrell Ingham/Getty Images

Duno on the curve

Rookie Milka Duno acquits herself well in her first IndyCar Series race

Entering her first oval race, the Kansas Lottery Indy 300, only a week before Opening Day for the Indy 500, Venezuelan Milka Duno had a steep learning curve – but is committed to riding that curve as far as she can.

"I learned so much in this race," she said after Kansas. "It's 200 laps with traffic, higher speeds, I learned a lot. Sure at Indy, I'll still be learning, but every race it's important you learn something new."

Although she has had some success in the Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series driving Daytona prototypes, Kansas was both her first race in Indy cars and her first on an oval. She qualified last, but stayed out of trouble and was faster at the end of the race than in the beginning.

"When I was in traffic, the car was no good. It was so crazy understeering and keeping the car on the track. We made a pit stop and made some corrections and the car was so good and I started to recover," Duno said.

She credits a pair of veterans to helping her through her 291 miles at Kansas Speedway – engineer Steve Challis and spotter Pancho Carter, the pole winner at Indianapolis in 1985.

"Pancho was helping me so much," she said. "Once the car was good, it was 'Push, Milka! Push, Milka! Flat on track.' It was so helpful for me, and I appreciate so much the help of all my team."

Indy-tainment overload!

Ever daydream of not only driving in the Indianapolis 500 but also seeing your name on the sides of an IndyCar Series car? The Indianapolis Motor Speedway crowd – the highest-attended single-day sporting event in the world – cheers as you take a parade lap, while, worldwide, audiences point to their TVs?

Well, keep dreaming. But you can design a 500 racer emblazoned with your name, company logo or photo of the family pet on indycar.com. It's one of the more than two dozen interactive fan-friendly features on the official Web site of the Indy Racing League. You also can submit photos and video clips from the track, vote in fan polls and give your opinion through "Talkback."

The IndyCar Series Community pieces complement the flag-to-flag coverage of "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing," which includes live streaming video with built-in Timing & Scoring during every practice session, daily video highlights and news conference podcasts, on-the-spot reports and historic feature stories and much more.

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A POINTLESS EXERCISE



Inside Line

Jeff Olson, Senior Writer

I'm going to go out on a limb and make a wild statement: *Dan Wheldon is the favorite to win the Indy 500.*

With an addendum:

So is Helio Castroneves. And Sam Hornish Jr. And Scott Dixon. And Tony Kanaan. And Dario Franchitti. And Marco Andretti. Oh, yes...and Michael Andretti.

And, if we're going to call favorites, why stop with the eight most obvious? We all know anything can happen at Indianapolis Motor Speedway; the Andrettis proved last year that the race isn't necessarily about speed but about positioning and strategy. So we really shouldn't leave the following off the list:

Danica Patrick, Vitor Meira, Tomas Scheckter, Scott Sharp.

Even Wheldon, who knows he's the No. 1 pick after his dominating win at Kansas Speedway, won't argue with the fact that perhaps as many as a dozen are on the list of contenders. So don't pencil in Mr. Wheldon as the winner just yet, even if he has led 484 of the 700 laps this season – a smooth 69.1 percent – and 178 of the 400 previous laps at Indy. The race is not *just* about the fastest car.

"You can't be fazed by the speeds other people are doing," says Wheldon. "You have to get the best out of the package you have. You're going to be in a lot of traffic at different stages of the race, but you also have the ability over eight or nine pit stops to change the car and make it better. It's about having a strong sense of self-belief and a strong belief in your team."

When talking about belief, you must talk about Team Penske, an outfit that has won the Indy 500 a record 14 times, including four times in the past six years. The major "yeah

but" in Wheldon's status as Indy favorite is the other red-and-white group that wins it with astounding consistency. Thus, if Wheldon is at the top of the list, then Hornish and Castroneves aren't far below, nor are their names written in fine print.

"I'd put myself at the top of the list, then a blank space, and then the third-place guy," joked Castroneves, who won Indy in 2001 and '02.

"Seriously, I'd have to say Sam is the favorite, and then I'd have to say Ganassi and Andretti Green are the biggest challenge for us. Indy is never about one guy.

"It's pit stops and handling and being in the right place at the right time," he adds. "If those three things go your way, then you have a



Michael Levitt/Getty Images

One of these drivers is the favorite to win the 91st Indy 500. We'll be a little more specific on May 28...

chance, but they all have to come together at the same time."

Then perhaps it's pointless to call out a favorite for the 91st Indianapolis 500?

"The month is so difficult," Wheldon says. "It's hard to pick out a favorite, but judging by the performance we've had in the last three or four races and our previous experience there, I think we'll put on a good show."

That's all we ask, and precisely why we watch.

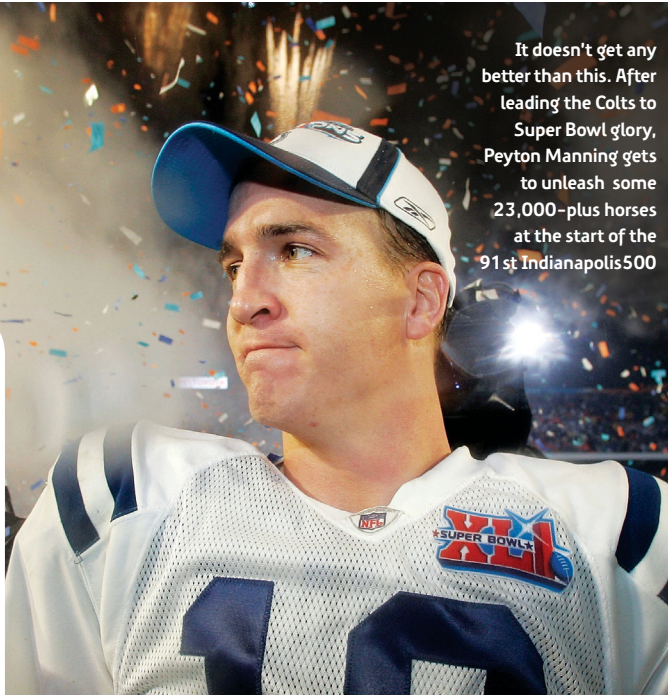
PEYTON MANNING TO THROW THE GREEN

Indy's Super Bowl hero gets the 91st Indy 500 under way

If you need additional confirmation as to how crazy Indianapolis is for its Super Bowl champion Colts, look no further than this year's Indy 500 grand marshal.

Colts quarterback and Super Bowl XLI Most Valuable Player Peyton Manning will wave the green flag to start the 91st Indianapolis 500. He will also serve as the grand marshal of the 500 Festival Parade on Saturday, May 26.

"We're excited that Peyton Manning will wave the green flag to start the 91st Indianapolis 500," says IMS President Joie Chitwood. "His performance in the Colts' run to the Super Bowl secured his place among the all-time Indiana sports legends, electrifying and uniting the entire community in a blue wave of Colts team spirit. He also has been a great friend to the Speedway and greater Indianapolis since coming here in 1998."



It doesn't get any better than this. After leading the Colts to Super Bowl glory, Peyton Manning gets to unleash some 23,000-plus horses at the start of the 91st Indianapolis 500

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WHO GOT MILK?
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Legend of the Speedway

Brack, a new band formed by 1999 Indy 500 winner Kenny Brack, has released a rocking tribute to A.J. Foyt's 50 years at the Brickyard, "Legend of the Speedway."

Foyt was the car owner for Brack's Brickyard triumph, adding to his record-equaling four wins as a driver, and is impressed by his former protégé's musical prowess.

"I always knew Kenny could play the guitar," said the legendary Texan, "but after hearing this song, I found out he can write, too."

Brack, the band, will be playing live at the Bombardier Learjet Pagoda during pre-race ceremonies for the Indy Pro Series' Freedom 100 on Miller Lite Carb Day, May 25. Check out their Web site at www.brackmusic.com.



Kenny Brack and his band made the video for "Legend of the Speedway" at the scene of his greatest triumph, Indy

WATCH THE VIDEO
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In addition to its exhilarating two-seater, the Indy Racing Experience has added self-drive excitement to its roster (above)

Fans get the driver's-eye view

Riding in the passenger seat of an 180mph two-seat IndyCar Series car at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway just became the second-best "ride of a lifetime," because fans can now get behind the wheel and drive.

Sinden Racing's Indy Racing Experience, which for almost a decade has thrilled thousands with a high-speed ride in the two-seat IndyCar Series cars at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, is offering enthusiasts the chance to drive an IndyCar Series car around the legendary 2.5-mile oval.

Participants will be put through a brief training session and then drive four laps around the Speedway behind one of the Indy Racing Experience's professional drivers.

For information on the Indy Racing Experience's new Indianapolis Motor Speedway drive-around program and the two-seat IndyCar Series car program, log on to www.indyracingexperience.com or call (888) 357-5002.

Me next! Patrick Dempsey talks to last year's Indy 500 Pace Car driver, Tour de France legend Lance Armstrong



McDREAMY SETS THE PACE Dempsey gets 'Vette hot seat for 500

Actor Patrick Dempsey, best known as Dr. Derek Shepherd - a.k.a "Dr. McDreamy" - on ABC's *Grey's Anatomy* and a respectable racer in his own right, will drive the 2007 Chevrolet Corvette Convertible Pace Car at the 91st Indianapolis 500.

"During recent years [Dempsey] has developed a strong bond with racing and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, so he truly understands and appreciates the pageantry, prestige and tradition of the Month of May and the Indianapolis 500," says IMS President Joie Chitwood.

Dempsey is co-owner of Vision Racing. He also drives in selected sports car races for Hyper Sport Racing and off-road events.

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All the best from Firestone to the IndyCar® Series drivers competing for the 2007 Championship. It's exciting for Firestone to be the Official Tire of the Indianapolis 500® Mile Race and the Indy Racing League®, which includes the IndyCar® Series and Indy Pro Series™. We're proud of all the advances we have made in the performance of Firestone street tires from our experience on the track. Enjoy the race today. Enjoy driving on Firestone tires every day.



2007 INDYCAR® SERIES SCHEDULE

24-March	Homestead-Miami Speedway	8:00 p.m. on ESPN2
1-April	Streets of St. Petersburg	2:30 p.m. on ESPN
21-April	Twin Ring Motegi	3:30 p.m. on ESPN
29-April	Kansas Speedway	4:30 p.m. on ESPN2
27-May	91st Indianapolis 500	Noon on ABC



2007 INDY PRO SERIES™ SCHEDULE

24-March	Homestead-Miami Speedway	ESPN2
31-March & 1-April	Streets of St. Petersburg	ESPN2
25-May	Indianapolis Motor Speedway (Oval)	ESPN2
2-June	The Milwaukee Mile	ESPN2
16-June & 17-June	Indianapolis Motor Speedway (Road Course)	ESPN2

Please check your local TV listings for exact times and dates. Schedule is subject to change.



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2007 IndyCar Series so far...

Dan Wheldon (near right and opposite right) has a pair of wins already in 2007, but Helio Castroneves (this page, right) and Tony Kanaan (opposite left) have also tasted the spoils of victory this season



Dan Strebeck/LAT



Paul Webby/LAT

XM Satellite Radio Indy 300

Homestead-Miami Speedway, Fla., March 24
200 laps/300 miles

- Marco Andretti retired from the race after 53 laps with handling problems.
- Alex Barron's and Curb Racing's return to the series came to a halt when Barron's car lost fuel pressure and he pulled into the garage.
- A multi-car accident on lap 94 began when Jeff Simmons spun and collected Kosuke Matsuura and A.J. Foyt IV.
- Danica Patrick had an inauspicious debut for Andretti Green Racing, spinning and making contact as she drove into the pits on lap 155.
- Dan Wheldon proved once again that he is the man at Homestead-Miami Speedway, dominating for his third straight victory at the track. It's the first time in IndyCar Series history that a driver has won three straight at the same track.
- It was a good day for Target Chip Ganassi Racing, because Scott Dixon finished second for a team one-two.

DRIVER	TEAM	CAR-ENGINE
1. Dan Wheldon	Target Chip Ganassi Racing	Dallara-Honda
2. Scott Dixon	Target Chip Ganassi Racing	Dallara-Honda
3. Sam Hornish Jr.	Team Penske	Dallara-Honda
4. Vitor Meira	Delphi Panther	Dallara-Honda
5. Tony Kanaan	Andretti Green Racing	Dallara-Honda

Pole winner: Dan Wheldon 214.322mph

He said it: "I wasn't having a good time out there tonight. We took a big risk and to be able to catch those guys in the future, that's the way it's going to have to be." **Tony Kanaan**



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Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg

Streets of St. Petersburg, Fla., April 1
100 laps/180 miles

- Tony Kanaan took himself out of the No. 1 starting position when he hit the wall during Fast Six qualifying, leaving Helio Castroneves on pole.
- Two collisions in Turn 4 on the first lap made life difficult for a few drivers. Andretti Green Racing teammates Kanaan and Dario Franchitti collided and, farther back, Jeff Simmons and Kosuke Matsuura came together. Simmons continued and Matsuura had to spend several laps in the pits for repairs.
- Kanaan and Franchitti's first-lap misfortune set up a pair of great drives as Franchitti advanced from last to fifth and Kanaan finished third after falling to 16th.
- Darren Manning turned in the first top-five qualifying effort for A.J. Foyt Racing since 1999. He ran near the front until he spun into the tire barrier in front of the charging Kanaan on lap 74.
- After the first round of pit stops, Castroneves was behind Dan Wheldon, but got around him quickly at the restart. The victory was Castroneves' second straight win at St. Petersburg.

DRIVER	TEAM	CAR-ENGINE
1. Helio Castroneves	Team Penske	Dallara-Honda
2. Scott Dixon	Target Chip Ganassi Racing	Dallara-Honda
3. Tony Kanaan	Andretti Green Racing	Dallara-Honda
4. Marco Andretti	Andretti Green Racing	Dallara-Honda
5. Dario Franchitti	Andretti Green Racing	Dallara-Honda

Pole winner: Helio Castroneves 105.052mph

He said it: "The last 30 minutes killed me. My feet were numb and my hands were in such pain as I tried to keep ahead of Tony Kanaan. The steering was so heavy on full tanks and new tires because this track has so much grip. It was tough to hold on. I should have let Tony go." **Darren Manning**



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Paul Webb/LAT



Driver Standings After four of 17 races

Rank	Driver	Points
1	Dan Wheldon	171
2	Scott Dixon	144
3	Helio Castroneves	136
4	Dario Franchitti	131
5	Tony Kanaan	130
6	Sam Hornish Jr.	119
7	Tomas Scheckter	104
8	Danica Patrick	85
9	Vitor Meira	83
10	Scott Sharp	82
11	Jeff Simmons	73
12	Darren Manning	72
13	Buddy Rice	72
14	Marco Andretti	70
15	A.J. Foyt IV	68
16	Sarah Fisher	68
17	Ed Carpenter	68
18	Kosuke Matsuura	51
19	Marty Roth	27
20	Alex Barron	26
21	Milka Duno	16

Indy Japan 300

Twin Ring Motegi, Japan, April 21
200 laps/300 miles

- Home country favorite Kosuke Matsuura's run of (bad) luck continued, as he half-spun and contacted the SAFER Barrier in Turn 2. It was the third time in three races that he has had contact with the wall. It was the beginning of a bad day for Panther Racing, because Vitor Meira retired with handling issues after 50 laps.
- Polesitter Helio Castroneves led the first 43 laps until Dan Wheldon passed him in Turn 2. Wheldon would lead most of the race, although he had no radio communication for much of the early going.
- Tony Kanaan took the lead for the first time on lap 84 after pit stops. He later passed Wheldon on lap 122 and led until a round of pit stops when Marco Andretti brought out the yellow on lap 135 after hitting the wall in Turn 4.
- The latter part of the race turned into a fuel economy run, but none of the leaders could make it to the end. Kanaan came out on top after the last stops for fuel. Kanaan led Wheldon to the checker by 0.4828sec.

DRIVER	TEAM	CAR-ENGINE
1. Tony Kanaan	Andretti Green Racing	Dallara-Honda
2. Dan Wheldon	Target Chip Ganassi Racing	Dallara-Honda
3. Dario Franchitti	Andretti Green Racing	Dallara-Honda
4. Scott Dixon	Target Chip Ganassi Racing	Dallara-Honda
5. Helio Castroneves	Team Penske	Dallara-Honda

Pole winner: Helio Castroneves 205.393mph

He said it: "I think I have to say when you consider the pace of our car, I think even Tony would agree it was probably the best out there. It was just a little bit unfortunate we lost radio communication pretty early on." **Dan Wheldon**



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RACE HIGHLIGHTS JAPAN [CLICK HERE](#)

Kansas Lottery Indy 300

Kansas Speedway, Kan., April 29
200 laps/300 miles

- Polesitter Tony Kanaan's day went sour when he collided with teammate Danica Patrick trying to pull into his pit stall. A bent suspension lost him several laps and Patrick was briefly blocked.
- Marco Andretti dropped quickly from his ninth-place starting position, and then retired on lap 64 with handling problems.
- Dan Wheldon got lucky when he was committed to pit lane as the second caution came out. Leading, he had been called in for a deflating tire, and didn't lose a lap with the yellow.
- Scott Dixon was given a drive-through penalty after his final stop for moving onto the apron to enter pit lane too late, dropping him from second to fourth.
- Unlike at Motegi, Wheldon capped off a dominating day with a victory, his second of the season.
- Milka Duno's debut in the IndyCar Series was relatively uneventful. Although she qualified last, she stayed out of the way of traffic and came home in 14th.

DRIVER	TEAM	CAR-ENGINE
1. Dan Wheldon	Target Chip Ganassi Racing	Dallara-Honda
2. Dario Franchitti	Andretti Green Racing	Dallara-Honda
3. Helio Castroneves	Team Penske	Dallara-Honda
4. Scott Dixon	Target Chip Ganassi Racing	Dallara-Honda
5. Tomas Scheckter	Vision Racing	Dallara-Honda

Pole winner: Tony Kanaan, 214.188mph

She said it: "At the beginning, I had crazy understeer in my car because it's so difficult to drive behind other cars. It was a crazy, crazy car in the beginning. But my engineer, Steve Challis, made a fantastic adjustment - we made pit stops and made corrections to the car, and the car was so good that was the moment that I started to recover and run with the highest speeds the car give me." **Milka Duno**



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Words by John Oreovicz • Main photos by Robert Laberge/Getty Images

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THE LONGEST MONTH...

From driving the team haulers into the Indianapolis Motor Speedway to the post-race banquet, here's how three-plus weeks are filled out at the Brickyard

Traditions endure at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Indy's Month of May doesn't run from the 1st to the 30th, like it did up through the mid-1970s, but IndyCar Series teams still spend the better part of three weeks within the Brickyard's grounds every year.

This year, the IndyCar Series gave its teams an additional challenge by scheduling a race at Kansas Speedway on April 29, just a week before Opening Day. To make things even more difficult, the Kansas race came just eight days after the League's only flyaway international event, at Twin Ring Motegi, Japan. So there was no rest for the weary heading into the grueling month of May.

Here's how it all unfolds...

Tuesday, May 1 - Friday, May 4

While cars are being prepped at the race shop, teams will send a partial crew to the Speedway to begin setting up for the month. It's literally like moving in, because during the month, the cars are worked on in garages in Gasoline Alley, rather than under an awning attached to the transporters. But the transporters still play an important role in May, because many of them function as mobile machine shops for the teams. They are all lined up neatly in the Speedway infield and washed daily. Teams will also use this time to set up their pit lane timing stands and equipment.

Saturday, May 5

It's unlikely to draw any IndyCar Series drivers, but the One America 500 Festival Mini Marathon attracts 35,000 participants, making it the largest half-marathon in the U.S. The entry was increased by 5000 this year, and the Mini still sold out months in advance. The 13.1-mile course includes a lap of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and some 50,000 friends and family members greet the runners for the finish at Military Park.



Sunday, May 6 - Opening Day and Monday, May 7

Noon-5 p.m. Rookie Orientation Program

Rookie orientation used to be held as a separate test session in late April, but in recent years, the first couple of days of official action is reserved for first-year drivers. Given that there are only a couple of rookies entered in the 500 this year, there won't be many cars on the track. It's 10 hours of track time for the newbies to slowly work their way up to speed under the watchful eye of series officials and veteran drivers like Johnny Rutherford. The Indianapolis 500 rookie test requires a candidate to complete a series of 10-lap stints within a prescribed speed range. Veteran drivers who have been out of action for several years, such as Davey Hamilton, may also be allowed on to the track for a refresher test.

Tuesday, May 8

Noon-6p.m. IndyCar Series practice

May 6 was officially A.J. Foyt Opening Day, but this is the first meaningful day of action. With the compacted month of May schedule, most teams get right to work. There's a publicity race for first on the track honors at noon (it was the only race Dick Simon ever won...), but then it's down to business. A couple of installation laps to check for leaks and radio operation, then focus on the baseline setup. The Dallara-Honda combination has been around for a few years now, so most teams can get dialed in pretty quickly. But the weather can have a major effect on how the rest of the week plays out.

(Above right) Marco Andretti went through rookie orientation last year, while dad Michael (in car) was allowed to get familiar with the Speedway again.

(Right) Helio Castroneves kisses his car after his run on (a delayed) 2006 Pole Day

Wednesday, May 9

Noon-6p.m. IndyCar Series practice

If it's a clear and sunny week, this is a day when the top teams will want to put a lot of miles on their primary and backup cars, taking particular note of how the car responds to changes in atmospheric conditions such as temperature, humidity and wind speed and direction. Some teams might try to grab a few minutes of airtime on the local news by going for a number during what is known as Happy Hour. From 5 o'clock to the 6 o'clock closing gun, conditions for speed get better as shadows from the grandstands cool the track surface.

Thursday, May 10

Noon-6p.m. IndyCar Series practice

Multi-car teams will often split development duties and have one driver switch the focus to a qualifying setup while the other(s) continue searching for an optimum balance in all conditions. Quite a few ride-hunting drivers will start to show up in the paddock, letting owners know that they are available for a second weekend qualification program.

Friday, May 11 - Fast Friday

Noon-6p.m. IndyCar Series practice
6 p.m. Pole Day qualifying draw

They call the day before Pole Day "Fast Friday" because teams install a fresh Honda V8 engine and make simulated qualifying runs. Even though there is a practice session on Pole Day, teams would rather make sure the cars are ready to qualify a day in advance. Then, after the 6 o'clock gun, the qualifying draw takes place.

Saturday, May 12 - Pole Day qualifying

9-11 a.m. IndyCar Series practice
Noon-6 p.m. Pole qualifications

Will Pole Day dawn wet or dry? If it's the latter, there's the early morning practice session to make final adjustments to the cars for the projected conditions of the day. The fastest speeds of the month are often seen in this practice session. Then it's just a matter of waiting your turn in the qualification line. When the time comes, the weather conditions will determine whether a team makes a qualifying attempt or pulls out of line. Conditions are generally quick for the first 60 to 90 minutes, before the afternoon heat takes over. That leads to an afternoon lull, followed by another 60 to 90 minutes of frantic activity at the end of the day when the shadows have crept in. The new qualification rules (see sidebar) have never been tested, so a lot of lessons about strategy will be learned this year. ▶



Dan Strecky/LAT



Tyler Barrick/Getty Images

(Above) Qualifying complete, the 2006 front row lines up for the cameras, with Sam Hornish Jr. on the pole, followed by Helio Castroneves and Dan Wheldon

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Indy 500 qualifying "101"

Setting the starting field for the Indianapolis 500 used to be relatively simple: After 33 drivers qualified, anyone who went faster bumped a slower competitor out. The only anomaly came when a second- or third-day qualifier posted a faster speed than the pole driver, yet still started deep in the field.

Everything changed in 2005, when IndyCar Series officials decreed that only 11 drivers would qualify on Pole Day, followed by 11 more the second day (positions 12-22), another 11 on the third day (23-33), then finally the traditional "Bump Day."

How has the new system worked? Well, nobody really knows yet, because qualifying was blighted by rain in 2005 and '06. But here's how it's supposed to work...

On Pole Day, once positions 1-11 are filled, bumping will occur for the rest of the day, locking in pole position and the first 11 spots on the 33-car grid. Each car is permitted three qualifying attempts per day.

For the second day of qualifying, grid positions 12 through 22 are available. Once those spots are full, bumping will occur only in spots 12 through 22 for the rest of the day to determine the fastest 11 qualifiers for that day. The same thing happens on the third day.

Any Bump Day qualifying attempt that is faster than one of the 33 qualified entrants will bump the slowest qualifier from the field, regardless of their day of qualification. The remaining qualified entrants will move ahead one position in the starting field and the new qualifier will be gridded 33rd.

If a car is bumped on any day of qualifications, that entrant can re-enter the qualification line and attempt to re-qualify if the car still has attempts remaining. A qualified competitor can also withdraw and try again for a faster speed.

1 Go to a short-track race. Catch a glimpse of some of racing's future stars at more than a dozen grass-roots oval tracks spread around the state of Indiana. From Anderson Speedway to the Terre Haute Action Track, there's plenty of sideways action to witness during the month of May.

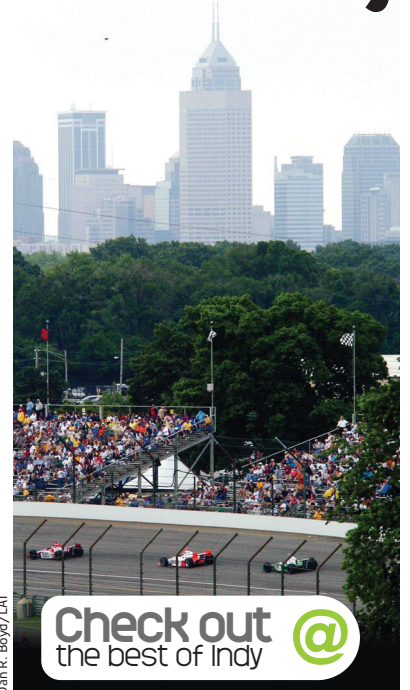
2 Catch the 500 Festival Parade. Celebrating its 50th anniversary, the 500 Festival Parade is comparable to the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade. Around 300,000 spectators line the streets of Indianapolis, at noon on Saturday before the race, to be part of the spectacle, which includes all 33 drivers in the Indy 500 field.

3 White River State Park. A state park in the heart of the city that also features three museums (Eiteljorg, State of Indiana and the NCAA Hall of Champions), an IMAX Theater and the Indianapolis Zoo. Oh, and the finest minor league baseball park in the nation - Victory Field, home of the AAA Indianapolis Indians.

4 More Museums. The world-renowned Indianapolis Children's Museum attracts more than a million visitors annually, and the Indianapolis Museum of Art is one of the largest in the nation. For gearheads, there's the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame or the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum (a two-hour drive, but worth the trip).

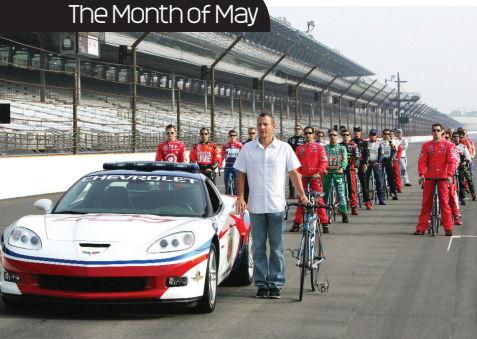
5 Take a road trip to Brown County. The Indianapolis landscape is mostly flat, but the view improves an hour or so to the south. Combine a drive through the rolling woods of Brown County with a stop in Bloomington, home of Indiana University. And keep an eye out for Hoosier icon John "Cougar" Mellencamp.

Five things you must do in Indy



Dan R. Boyd/LAT

Check out @
the best of Indy



Robert Laberge/Getty Images

10 reasons the Indy 500 is unique

- 1 It's three weeks long.** Every other IndyCar Series event is done after two or three days, but at Indy they're just getting started. And they used to run all month...
- 2 The magic "33."** The AAA used a complex formula to determine that a track the size of Indianapolis could hold 33 cars. That's been the number since 1934, except for "extenuating circumstances."

3 The 500 Festival Parade. a 50-year tradition in Indianapolis, The 500 Festival Parade draws a six-figure crowd and entertains all ages. It's preceded by a drivers' meeting at the track that's open to the public.

4 The infield golf course. It used to be a \$12 "munie," but these days it's a premium Pete Dye design called Brickyard Crossing Resort. Play during May with cars rushing past at 220mph.

5 Pork tenderloin sandwiches. This Hoosier delicacy (a boneless piece of pork smashed flat, breaded and deep-fried) is available at food stands around the Speedway.

6 Famous faces on the flag stand and in the pace car. This year, Super Bowl-winning Indianapolis Colts QB Peyton Manning waves the green flag at the start. Lance Armstrong (above left), Colin Powell and Morgan Freeman are the last three pace car drivers.

7 Back Home Again in Indiana. An Indy tradition since 1946, Mel Tormé, Vic Damone and Dinah Shore have all sung it, but Jim Nabors ("Gomer Pyle") made it his signature tune in 1972.

8 The balloon launch. Started in 1947 at the suggestion of Tony Hulman's wife Mary, thousands of balloons are released into the sky (below) as Nabors hits the final note of "Back Home Again..."



F. Peirce Williams/LAT

9 Milk for the winner. A dairy executive cashed in on three-time Indy winner Louis Meyer's odd habit of swilling buttermilk on a hot day. A tradition since 1956, though Emerson Fittipaldi broke protocol with orange juice in 1993.

10 The Borg-Warner Trophy. One of the most recognizable trophies in sport, the Borg-Warner debuted in 1936. Fourteen-inch tall "Baby Borgs" have gone to the winning driver since 1989.

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Five places to eat and drink in Indy

When Jimmy Buffet decided to open his chain of "Cheeseburger in Paradise" restaurants, he chose Indianapolis as his test market. Hoosiers love familiarity when it comes to their food, but there are still a few unique, non-corporate dining spots in and around greater Indianapolis for every budget. Try these out!

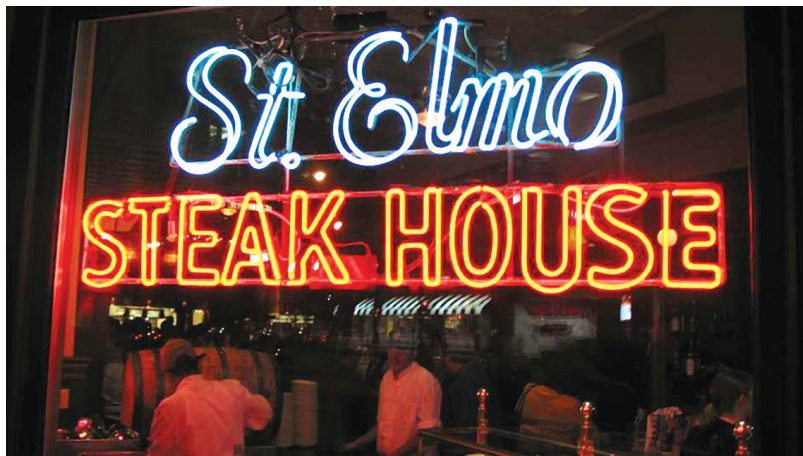
St. Elmo Steak House

127 S. Illinois Street; (317) 635-0636

Most steakhouses are famous for their red meat, but Elmo's (above right) well-heeled clientele keeps coming back for the shrimp cocktail. Genuinely jumbo-sized shrimp are set ablaze by a sauce packing a mind-blowing horseradish rush that thankfully fades in a few seconds. Classic steakhouse décor with 90 years of IMS history represented on the walls.

Union Jack Pub

6225 W. 25th Street, Speedway; (317) 243-3300
924 Broad Ripple Avenue; (317) 257-4343



The Speedway location of this two-restaurant chain is an old racer's hangout, where in less politically correct days you could find drivers cruising the bar for female companionship. Food is typical pub fare and you'll find a better selection of beer in Broad Ripple, but during May, UJs never lets you forget you're just a mile from the Brickyard.

Shapiro's Delicatessen

808 S. Meridian Street; (317) 631-4041
918 S. Rangelline Road, Carmel; (317) 573-3354

For more than a hundred years, Shapiro's motto has been "Cook good. Serve generously. Price modestly. People will come." And that's pretty much self-explanatory. This is kosher food at its finest and even hardcore New Yorkers rate Shapiro's corned beef sandwich (on fresh-baked rye) as the best anywhere.

MCL Cafeteria

9 Indianapolis locations

Dan Gurney used to call the MCL, located right down Crawfordsville Road from the Speedway, his favorite restaurant in Indianapolis. The city has a lot more dining choices these days, but you can't go wrong with MCL's reasonably priced, down home food. Highlights are the fried chicken and the made-from-scratch pies and cakes for dessert.

Red Key Lounge

5170 N. College Avenue; (317) 283-4601

A useful stop-off point for cheap eats on the way from downtown to Broad Ripple. Featuring an aviation theme and run for almost 60 years by a World War II vet, the Red Key boasts Indy's best burger. But bring your manners; profanity is not allowed, and you'll be heckled if you order an import or swig your Bud straight from the bottle.

**Sunday, May 13 – Second-day qualifying/
Riley Family Day**

10.15-11.15 a.m. IndyCar Series practice
Noon-6 p.m. Qualifications

If you're one of the 11 drivers who qualified on Pole Day, you might get the day off. But if the forecast for the upcoming week is wet, you'll probably be pounding around the Speedway on full tanks, testing how the car responds as a 22-gallon load of 100 percent, fuel-grade ethanol burns off. For the rest of the entrants, it's another tense day of qualifications, with 11 more cars making the show.

Monday, May 14 – Tuesday, May 15

No track activity

The Speedway is quiet for two days, so many qualified drivers will take advantage and catch up on media and sponsor obligations. Those who haven't made the field will be meeting with their teams, trying to figure out how to extract more speed out of their cars.

Wednesday, May 16 – Friday, May 18

Noon-6 p.m. IndyCar Series practice

As seats get filled, new car and driver combinations will venture out for their first exploratory laps of 2007. Some will immediately be on the pace, but others will struggle, depending on their level of experience and the quality of team they are with. Meanwhile, qualified teams will continue to work on their full-tank balance.

**Saturday, May 19 – Third-day
qualifying/Coca-Cola Throwback Day**

10.15-11.15 a.m. IndyCar Series practice
Noon-6 p.m. Qualifications

High rollers start the day at the Mayor's Breakfast, which this year features appearances from Bobby Unser, Al Unser, and Al Unser Jr., who claim nine Indianapolis 500 victories between them. Then 11 more cars will qualify and bumping will begin. Drivers who aren't sweating about whether they will make the race might check out the Psychedelic '70s cars show in the infield on Coca-Cola Throwback Day, or buy a cheap soda and hot dog.



**Sunday, May 20 – Bump Day/
Armed Forces Day**

10.15-11.15 a.m. IndyCar Series practice
Noon-6 p.m. Qualifications

The real intrigue on Bump Day is in Gasoline Alley. Who will get a chance to jump into a car at the last minute and make a dramatic qualification attempt? Some surprising names have shown up in the recent past. Military efforts from past and present are also honored on Armed Forces Day.

Monday, May 21-Tuesday, May 22

No track activity

On the Monday, the 33 drivers will be flown to New York for a full day of media activities, an Indy 500 tradition that started in 2005. Meanwhile, the Indy Pro Series teams will be arriving at the Speedway to prepare for their support race.



**Wednesday, May 23 – American Family
Insurance 500 Festival Community Day**

9 a.m.-6 p.m. Public track laps/
garages open to public
3-5 p.m. Driver autograph session,
garage area

For the fans, it's Community Day, a chance to get driver autographs and even drive your own car around the Speedway. For the teams, the PR side of things takes on extra momentum, with sponsor appearances and media dinners filling up the evenings as race day approaches.

**Thursday, May 24 – Freedom 100
practice and qualifying**

9-9.45 a.m., 11-11.45 a.m. and 3.40-4 p.m.
Indy Pro Series Practice
1.15p.m. Indy Pro Series qualifying

A day for the Indy Pro Series to get some track time and qualify for Friday's Freedom 100. They get one day instead of two weeks, but then their race is only 20 percent as long...

Friday, May 25 – Miller Lite Carb Day

11 a.m.-noon IndyCar Series practice
12.30-1.30 p.m. Freedom 100
1.30-3 p.m. Checkers/
Rally's Pit Stop Challenge
3.30 p.m. Miller Lite Carb Day
Concert featuring KID ROCK



Carb Day has eclipsed Pole Day as the second most popular day of the month. Maybe it's because Carb Day packs in a lot of value for fans: A one-hour IndyCar Series practice session (the final shakedown before the race), then the Freedom 100 Indy Pro Series race, followed by the Checker's/Rally's Pit Stop Contest. As if that were not enough, the day is capped by an on-site concert featuring Kid Rock.



Saturday, May 26

No track activity
9-10 a.m. Driver autograph session,
Pagoda Plaza
11 a.m. Public Drivers' Meeting,
Tower Terrace
Noon IPL 500 Festival Parade,
Downtown Indianapolis

An all-driver autograph session at the Speedway, followed by the public drivers' meeting. Then everyone heads downtown for the 500 Festival Parade.

Sunday, May 27 – Race Day

6 a.m. Public gates open
12.30 p.m. Driver introductions
1p.m. 91st Indianapolis 500-Mile Race

After all the days of practice, qualifying, fine-tuning and more practice, it's time to get out there and do it. Drivers, start your engines!

Monday, May 28

The race winner, having done TV appearances until after midnight, is called back to the track at 9 o'clock the morning after the race for more photos and interviews. He (or she) will want to try to sneak in an afternoon nap, because the evening brings the Victory Celebration. Then it's off to New York the next morning for another media tour as a full year of fun and fame for the newest Indianapolis 500 champion is just getting started... ■

(Top left) Thiago Medeiros got into the starting field on Bump Day last year. (Left) Community Day fun for the drivers. (Top right) Three Doors Down entertain on Carb Day 2006. (Right) Autograph signing before the public driver meeting

Tyler Barrick/Getty Images

500 latest @
www.indycar.com

STEALTH FIGHTER

Words by Andy Hallbery • Main photo by Paul Webb/LAT



Coming in under the radar, Tony Kanaan won't be the focus of the media scrum in the buildup to the Indy 500, but he's confident he'll be a factor come race day



"You only get better when somebody gets better than you"
Tony Kanaan

Dan Streck/LAT

(Left) Tony Kanaan's always run strongly at the Indy 500. With Andretti Green Racing closing down its superspeedway deficit to Penske and Ganassi (right), will this be TK's year for 500 glory?

Tony Kanaan has been a factor in all five of the Indianapolis 500s he's contested – but a win has so far proven elusive.

He came nearest in 2004, leading 28 laps, but missing out on the chance of a late-race shootout with winner Buddy Rice when rain stopped it 20 laps early. In '05, he took the pole and led 54 laps, before finishing eighth after dropping off the lead group and, last year, when his Andretti Green Racing team struggled on superspeedways, he still led 12 laps and finished fifth. Throw in a third-place finish in '03 and the 23 laps he led in his '02 debut and it's a heck of an Indy resume so far. Albeit a non-winning one...

His win at Motegi is proof positive that the Andretti Green Racing crew has closed down the superspeedway gap to last year's dominant Penske and Ganassi outfits – and the similarities between Motegi's egg-shaped 1.5-miler and the mighty 2.5-mile Brickyard are not lost on Kanaan (significantly, Firestone will be bringing the same spec Firehawk it ran in Japan to Indy). Still, Kanaan's not confident enough to say that Indianapolis owes him a win. Far from it.

"It's not fair to say that," he smiles. "Just look at my boss [Michael Andretti]. Indy *really* owes him a win. I think if you look back on nearly a century we've been racing there, there were many drivers who could say the same thing. So I don't think it's fair to say Indy owes me one. But I do think it would be fair to say that I have put myself in a position to win every time. Eventually it might happen. The best chance I have is to put myself in a position to win each time I go there. It might never happen, but that's the only possibility I have."

Kanaan certainly goes to Indy this year with as good a chance as any. Factor in his previous record at the track, plus his and AGR's strong opening to 2007, and Penske and Ganassi shouldn't be having it all their way. All this after a '06 season that saw him and teammate Marco Andretti win just once each to break the red and white domination.

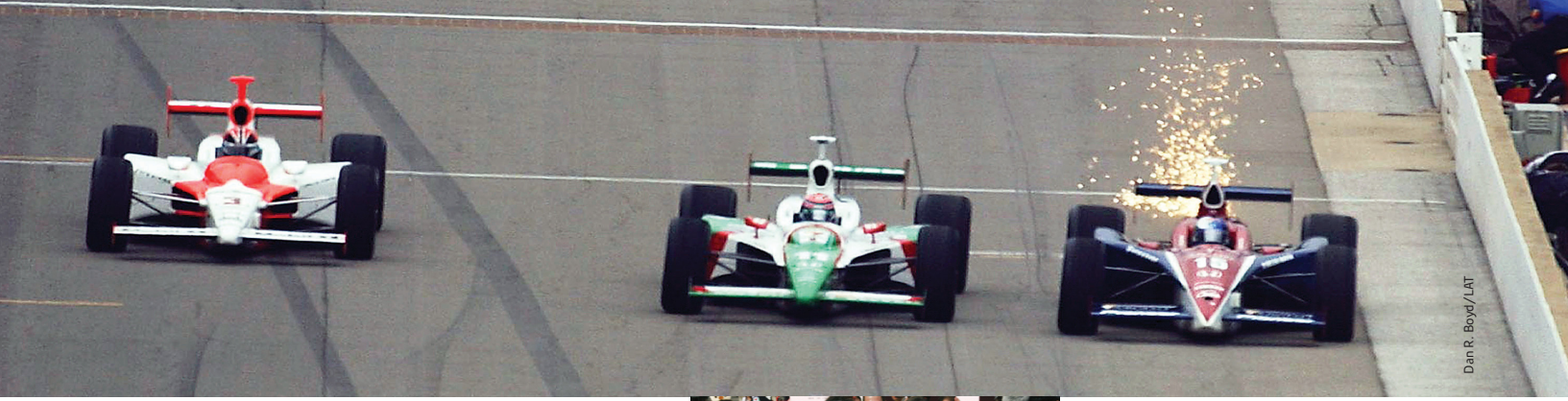
"We definitely had to put our heads together big time last year to find out what was going on," he says. "We had an advantage the years before, but we didn't realize how much. So, basically, it's been wind tunnel

testing, getting all the engineers together, shaker rig tests, and a bunch of other things so that we could improve. Before, we had an engine that covered over lot of the problems we didn't know we had – until other teams had the same power. It's not a criticism, but also we shouldn't be saying we didn't do enough, because we were dominating the way that we did...

"You only get better when somebody gets better than you, not just by competing against yourself. The real push comes when somebody goes and beats you. That's what happened to us last year. We're still catching up, and we're still not up there. We are more competitive than last year, but we're still not as consistent as they are."

Kanaan's opening to the 2007 season is certainly a firm foundation, and his victory at Motegi ranks high up on his personal check list of career "things to do" – second only, in fact, to an Indianapolis 500 win.

"It was a race that I always wanted to win," says Kanaan. "Having my car in the Honda museum across the way from Ayrton Senna's Formula 1 car...that's a big thing for me. ▶



Dan R. Boyd/LAT



Darrell Ingham/Getty Images



Dan Streck/LAT

(Above) So close... Buddy Rice's brave pass, followed by race-stopping rain thwarted Kanaan in 2004. (Left) Dan Wheldon hugs TK in Japan. Wheldon won Mote'gi in '05 for AGR, then went on to win Indy. An omen?

The kids are all right

As a mentor, as well as boss, for Andretti Green Racing's driving roster, Michael Andretti wears two distinct hats: one for the team's two veterans, Tony Kanaan and Dario Franchitti, and another for the team's youngsters, Marco Andretti and Danica Patrick.

We know the chances for the first two – and Michael himself – to win the 91st Indianapolis 500 are excellent, but what are the chances for the younger pair? Very good, the boss says.

"They've both shown they're good at Indy," he says. "As soon as Marco understood what a comfortable car was last year, he was very fast. You could see how he progressed just by watching his practice speeds. And Danica's been fast at Indy from the start. She knows what it takes to get a car up to speed here."

Marco, who passed his father and led the late laps of last year's race, was edged at the finish line by Sam Hornish Jr. Still, the runner-up finish served notice to the competition that the rookie had arrived. Three months later, he won at Infineon Raceway, his first IndyCar Series victory.

"I have a year under my belt; that's how I feel about it," Marco says. "Every track I go to, I've raced an IndyCar at. That helps so much. The whole month of May last year, just the seat time for me was invaluable. You bring a little bit more of that quiet confidence back. Hopefully, we keep that confidence."

Same goes for Patrick, whose first year with AGR has been a learning experience so far. She's adjusted to new terminology and a different approach, and she's gaining ground.

"As a driver, I've become more confident," she says. "I've learned what a car is supposed to feel like. It's so difficult to go out there and say, 'I want a car to do something else,' and not to have been there before, not to have felt that feeling before, because you sort of just accept that a car is supposed to feel a certain way."

Marco Andretti gets a second shot at Indy, while Danica Patrick returns for a third time. Could either pull off a win this time around?

"You can't put extra pressure on yourself. There's already enough, so any more isn't gonna help"

Tony Kanaan

It's like something I never could have imagined. But I'm one of the longest serving drivers for Honda, and I have a lot of Japanese fans as well – they have seen me there for 11 years. For me, it's almost like a home race."

"That win takes a lot of the pressure off of the team and myself. While it's only one race, it's already a move forward. We're building up to Indy, so it's a good way to head into May."

The five-car AGR attack will undoubtedly be in the spotlight all May, but it's likely that Kanaan and teammate Dario Franchitti won't be as center stage in the media frenzy that is bound to engulf their teammates Michael, Marco and Danica Patrick – a fact not lost on the only one of the quintet who has actually won an IndyCar Series Championship, back in 2004.

"Oh, for sure that will help," he says. "No disrespect to the media, but it certainly is a distraction. We run from noon to 6 p.m. nearly every day. Then, at the end of the day, we have to talk to people, we sometimes have appearances, this and that. But those guys

have that *every day*, and we don't. And you know what? I really don't mind. I don't have a problem giving interviews, but for sure I'll be able to focus on the real thing, the car, the setups. We all know who Danica is, we know who the young, rising American star is – and the old one as well, who's been trying to win this race forever, having been so close. Fine, that's perfect. I can do my job for the month, and then at the end of race day, hopefully they can come and talk to me all they want!"

Kanaan is eager to get started at Indy, seeing the three weeks there as, "my own summer camp." And whether he likes it or not, "TK" gets to play camp leader for AGR's tight-knit bunch of drivers.

"My teammates always come to my bus," he says, feigning exasperation, "but they complain that I eat too healthy because it's all organic salad, and pasta with tomato sauce, blah, blah, blah. Yet they always end up coming because they have no other options. Nobody else will cook for them! So, instead of having hot dogs or cheeseburgers, they come and eat my healthy food anyway. We do go to Steak 'n' Shake once or twice in the month, and some other restaurants in town, because it's good to get out of racing mode at night. But, yes, we hang out a lot, and I think that's healthy."

"The build up to Indy I just try to do my way," he adds. "I have to be calm and just do my job. You can't put extra pressure on yourself. It's nearly a month long, so you're going to be totally drained if you do that. There's already enough pressure, so any more isn't gonna help. Still, I genuinely get very excited that I'm going to spend the month there. Let's see what happens." ■



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THE ULTIMATE PRIZE

To most racers, the Indianapolis 500 is a special race; but to each it means something a little different

Words by Bruce Martin • Main photo by Hutson/LAT Archive

PHOTO GALLERY
THAT WINNING FEELING
[CLICK HERE](#)



Sam Hornish Jr.

Defending Indianapolis 500 winner

"Any time I've ever driven in here, a smile comes over my face, even if it's only for a couple of seconds. I'd never have thought I'd be here for a job, unless it was cleaning up trash. The first time I ever came to the Speedway, I dreamt of racing here, so to win here was pretty unbelievable.

"When I started racing, I set my goals pretty high for what I thought I was capable of, and that was to come here and someday qualify for the Indy 500. But I don't think anybody can succeed in that without involvement from their family, and I had that with mine. For as much as I wanted it, it would never have happened if I didn't have parents who wanted it as badly as I did for myself – maybe even more, sometimes.

"Winning Indy, everyone takes me a little bit more seriously. There's probably as much status from winning and being a spokesman for the 500 as anything I've ever done.

"It was such a good year in 2006, being on the pole and winning the race, that it feels kinda strange to come back and try again. I mean, it can't get much better than that. But, hey, why not try to win it again? I enjoy the fact that I've won and now I can come back and have the chance to win it back to back."

Roger Penske

Winningest team owner, with 14 Indianapolis 500 victories

"I came here with my dad to watch the race in 1951, and I came here as a team owner for the first time in 1969. I'm as fired up today as I was when we came here to run the cars in '69. In fact, I'm even more excited than I was back then. Race day is still the biggest sporting event around the world. You see it, you feel it, there's no question about it. If you want to win a race, it's the Indianapolis 500. It's certainly a

"Last year doesn't mean a thing; it's what's going to happen this year"

Roger Penske

lot bigger than the Daytona 500.

"This is the greatest race in the world, and I love coming here. I look forward to it every year. I want to see one of our guys in the winner's circle, for sure, and that's why we're here. Nothing is more fun than riding around in that convertible after winning the race.

"When you start adding this stuff up, they're all great wins, but we're all looking for the next one. Last year doesn't mean a thing; it's what's going to happen this year."

Dan Wheldon

2005 Indianapolis 500 Winner

"It's one of those races that just captures you. In a way, losing the race last year when I had a winning package really made me realize what the Indianapolis 500 means to me.

"It just wrenched my heart from my body because both (Chip Ganassi Racing teammate) Scott Dixon and I had very good cars. We were running. I think, one-two with about 30 laps to go, and neither one of us pulled it off. That was incredibly disappointing, but it just makes me even more motivated to come back and try to win again.

"There's a lot of intensity about this race; a lot of pressure, and I like to drive with that. There's also a lot of history and tradition involved in the Indy 500, and a lot of great people who've won it. There are also a lot of

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OPPOSITE: So far-fetched was the idea of winning the Indy 500 that Rick Mears didn't even think about it growing up... Here he celebrates his second of four victories, in 1984

1. Sam Hornish Jr. says his parents wanted it as much as he did. They help him celebrate in 2006, along with his wife, Crystal
2. Michael Andretti experienced winning Indy as a car owner in 2005, when Dan Wheldon won
3. 2001 – the first of two so far for Helio Castroneves, and the 11th of 14 (and counting) for Roger Penske

great people who haven't won this race. To be able to say I've won it once, I'm proud of that, but it makes me hungry to do it again.

"Drinking the milk was my biggest realization that I'd won. When you cross that yard of bricks and see the checkered flag of the Indy 500, you begin to understand what you've accomplished. But to me, drinking the milk is what I remember most vividly about winning."

Michael Andretti

Holds record for most laps led by a non-winner: winning team owner in 2005

"Indianapolis has been a love/hate relationship. We've had a lot of good times here, made a lot of fans here, but boy, we've had a lot of bad times as well. And yet there's still something that brings you back. It would mean a lot to me to win here.

"I got a lot of satisfaction out of winning it as a team owner with Dan Wheldon in 2005. Is it the same? Not exactly, but it still makes you feel really good to be a part of it. When we won with Dan, I guess it felt like I'd won it as a driver, it was just such a great day for us. This team (Andretti Green Racing) is so special; it's like a big family. And you know how it is when a family member does well – it feels a lot like it was you. When Marco won his first IndyCar Series race, for instance, it was a huge day for me, too.

"Like I said, it's a different sort of satisfaction, but it's still very, very special when you win as an owner."

Danica Patrick

Only female driver to lead the Indianapolis 500; fourth-place finisher in 2005

"To me, the Indy 500 is so special because in one afternoon your life can be changed forever. This race opens doors and presents amazing opportunities. There's so much history and tradition behind it that being ▶



Michael Kimo/LAT



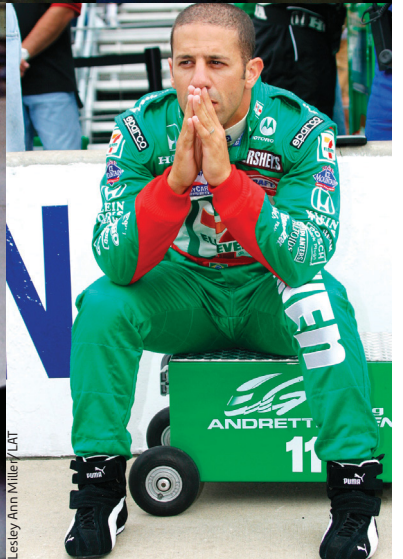
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Lesley Ann Miller/LAT



F. Peirce Williams/LAAT

Dream realized

When it sinks in that you've won the big one

When Sam Hornish Jr. achieved his lifelong dream of winning the Indianapolis 500 last year, following a dramatic race-winning pass over Marco Andretti at the checkered flag, it didn't take long for him to realize he'd achieved his mission. In fact, he had his fist in the air even before he was at the finish line, just a few feet ahead of Andretti's race car.

Sam Hornish Jr. might have lain on the yard of bricks all day once it began to sink in that he'd won the 2006 Indianapolis 500

"I knew where I was, compared to him," Hornish recalls. "If the engine had shut off at that point, I still had enough speed to get there. The worst thing you would want to do is have your fist in the air and not be the guy to win... I knew, judging where I was versus where Marco was, that I was far enough ahead of him.

"In my mind, I think that I'd had a finish like that from the first time I came here – the fact that I always felt if I ever did win here, it was going to be something that came down to the line like that."

Hornish's first emotion after he took the checkered flag was a sense of relief. "It was a very hard month for me," he recalls.

He felt emotion when he drove into Victory Lane, his voice choking back tears as he spoke about his grandmother, who'd died a few weeks earlier. Then, he felt a different emotion after he took the pace car ride around the track as the winner.

"When it came down to it, the first time

I had the elation where it was taking my breath away was when I was on the yard of bricks after that ride around the track," Hornish says. "I would have lain down there all day if they'd let me."

He didn't get to bed until 2:30 a.m., and had to be at the track by 8 a.m. for the winner's photos. He remembers asking himself why he was getting up so early and then realized he'd won the Indy 500, so he jumped out of bed into the shower.

There isn't any one moment where it hits him that he won the Indy 500, it's lots of individual snapshots.

"It sinks in a little bit more each time something happens," he says. "They unveiled the ticket; then I got the official ring from the Speedway; then I got my Baby Borg – all that stuff. Each of those little events puts another piece of the puzzle together and makes it more real.

"I don't wake up anymore in the morning hoping it's not still a dream."

1	2
3	4
5	6

involved is just such an amazing experience.

"Often times, it's very easy to get caught up in the moment of the race. But when I take a step back and look at the history that surrounds the Indianapolis 500, I realize just how special it really is."

Helio Castroneves

2001 and '02 Indianapolis 500 winner

"It's very difficult to describe, because it's so special. When I was in Brazil, in my second year of karting, back in 1989, I remember watching Emerson Fittipaldi winning it after his touch with Al Unser Jr. in Turn 3. I remember thinking, 'Wow, that's amazing. That place is just incredible, and one day I'm going to end up racing there.' But I was just a kid. Anyway, when I came to America, which was '96, I went to CART. The split was already done, so I never thought I'd race at Indy, until Roger Penske made the decision. That was 2001, and I was thrilled.

"My first test, I got really scared, it was so difficult. But scaring me was probably a good thing! Then, when I won the Indy 500 as a rookie, and it was TV, interviews, everything non-stop, all the time, I'm thinking, 'Hey, I won that race, I know what it feels like now.' And coming back and doing it again the second year, I'm like, 'This is just incredible!'

"I can't thank God enough for giving me the opportunity, first of all, just to be here, and secondly, the opportunity to be able to accomplish it, to go and win it. As I keep saying: amazing, amazing!"

Rick Mears

Four-time Indianapolis 500 winner

"You really can't just sum it up. Indy is Indy. Indy is unique. It's our Super Bowl. How many other ways you want to say it, there's no other race like Indy. It's the race we all want to win. Indianapolis has been the cornerstone of

motorsports from the beginning. Indianapolis has created racing and has created us as drivers. And we've helped create the legend of the race, too. It's a two-way street.

"I didn't think about the Indy 500 when I was growing up and started racing in Bakersfield, Calif., because it was out of my league as far as I was concerned. I was always realistic in my goal-setting, and I didn't have a goal to go to Indianapolis because I didn't think it could happen. Totally out of my league.

"When my first win came in my second attempt, I was still learning what Indy was, and what it meant. A few years down the road, when that second win still hasn't happened, you realize a whole lot of people don't get the opportunity to even be here, let alone win it, and you're grateful for winning it just once. So, hey, what are the chances of winning it more than once?"

Bobby Rahal

Winning driver in 1986;
winning team owner in 2004

"I appreciate it more as an owner because it's been so long since I won it as a driver. As an owner, you appreciate everything that goes in to making it happen a lot more. The sense of satisfaction is different in my mind. Also, winning it as a driver, let's face it, you're always introduced as an Indy 500 winner. As an owner, you aren't introduced as such. But having said that, it's great either way.

"Both my wins were pretty thrilling. Winning it as a driver with my team owner Jim Trueman, there was a lot involved with that from a sense of satisfaction. What was going on with Jim and the fact he did pass away after he'd seen the win, that made it a little bit more special, a little bit more of a thrill.

"In 2004, we had a degree of luck involved with the rain and it coming in when it did. Clearly, Buddy Rice had the fastest car and he

deserved to win. He dominated the month, the team dominated the month, so it would have been a crime had the rain come at a point where he wouldn't have been rewarded for the day he had. In the end, it all worked out and the rain came when he was leading. Even Tony Kanaan said the rain made no difference at the end, and this was the guy who was going to win. That showed what a gentleman Tony is."

Tony Kanaan

Second-place finisher in 2004

"The Indianapolis 500 is the one race everyone in the world knows about. It's the biggest race in the world. It's why we race. Growing up in Brazil, I knew all about the Indy 500. But until I came here for the first time, which was as a driver, I really had no way to know how special the place is.

"I know what it's like to have the feeling of winning a championship, so now I'd like to experience the feeling of winning the Indianapolis 500. I've had my two weeks of fame from having the pole position at Indy, but it would be so much better to win the race and be famous for a lifetime."

Vitor Meira

Second-place finisher in 2005

"It's the heart of the series. Without the Indianapolis 500, it couldn't and wouldn't be the same. It's not just a race, it's people's lives. It's not about having a good or a bad car, or even having a good or a bad day. It's about people's families and their lives. There are people who have spent their whole life to win just once, or to win none at all. I think it goes beyond racing and that's where the respect comes from.

"In 2005, I felt I had a really good chance of winning because I was getting much better restarts than Dan Wheldon. I felt like it could have been mine, but it wasn't to be. But I'll keep trying and pursuing the goal" ■

1. Danica Patrick first felt the white-hot spotlight when she led her rookie Indy 500 in 2005

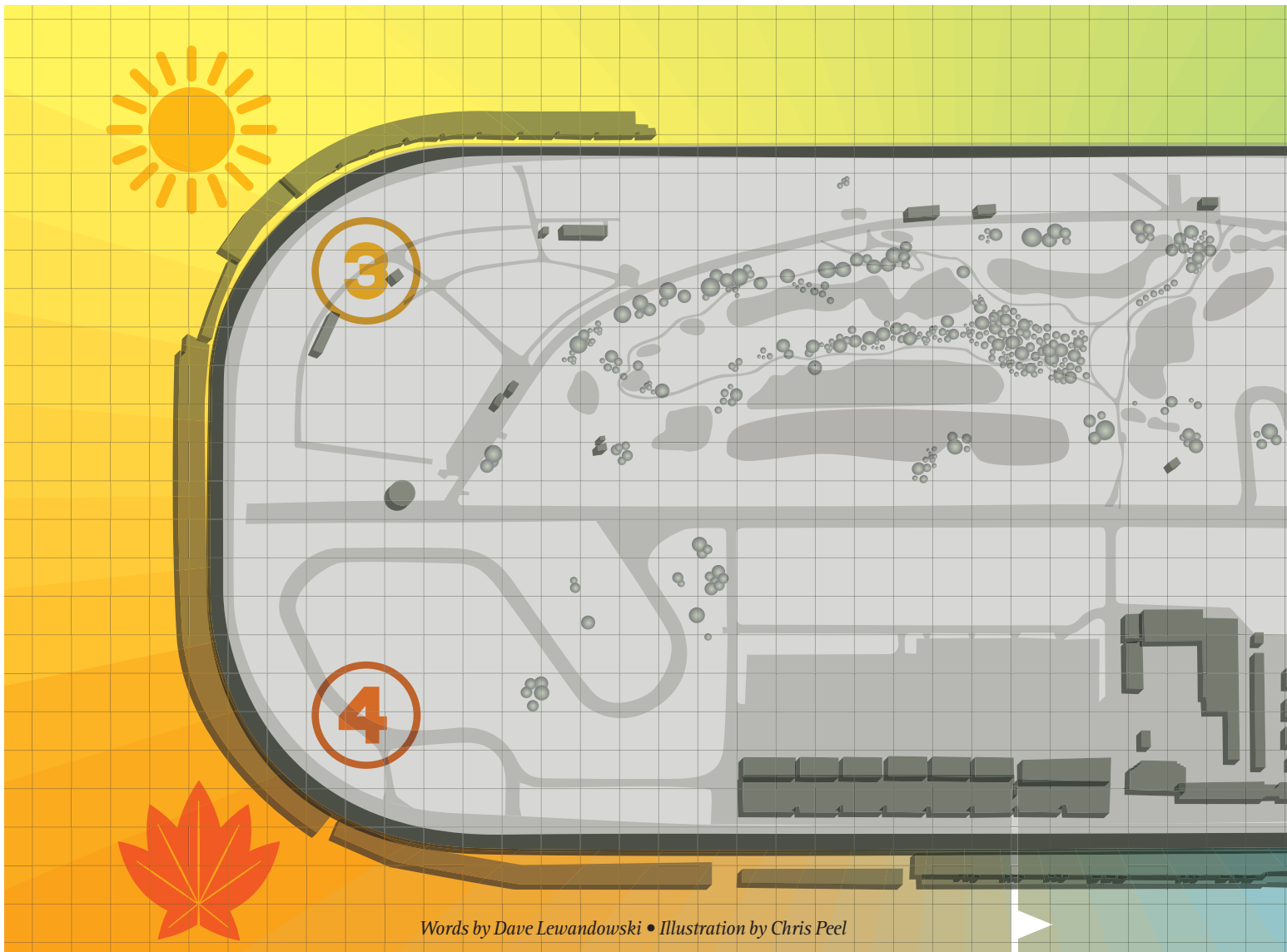
2. Racing into history. Rick Mears takes the checker for a second time in 1984

3. Vitor Meira (17) thought Indy could be his in 2005, but he finished second to Dan Wheldon

4. After winning as a driver, Bobby Rahal was able to celebrate with Buddy Rice as a car owner in 2004

5. Roger Penske got his first taste of the Brickyard as a car owner in 1969

6. So close... Second place in 2004 wasn't good enough for Tony Kanaan. Will 2007 be his year?



Words by Dave Lewandowski • Illustration by Chris Peel

FOUR SEASONS IN 40 SECONDS

Indianapolis Motor Speedway may look symmetrical, but each of its four turns has a different personality

Carl Fisher surveyed the 600-plus acres of prime farmland a few miles west of Indianapolis' hub with the vision of building a testing ground for a burgeoning local automobile industry.

In nearly a century since Fisher and his three partners laid the groundwork, the Indianapolis Motor Speedway has been more aligned with race car drivers attempting to prove themselves on the feisty 2.5 miles of (initially bricks and now asphalt, except for the yard of bricks at the finish line) track.

Almost everything has changed over the years as the superspeedway at the corner of 16th and Georgetown has become part of Americana by hosting the largest-attended single-day sporting event in the world each Memorial Day weekend. But Fisher's oval layout is unaltered: five-eighths-mile straightaways; quarter-mile turns at nine degrees and 12 minutes of banking; and eighth-mile connectors. From every seat in its cavernous

landscaped confines, spectators year after year are hard-pressed to notice differences between the south (Turns 1 and 2) and north (Turns 3 and 4) ends during the Indianapolis 500.

But that's where perception and reality differ.

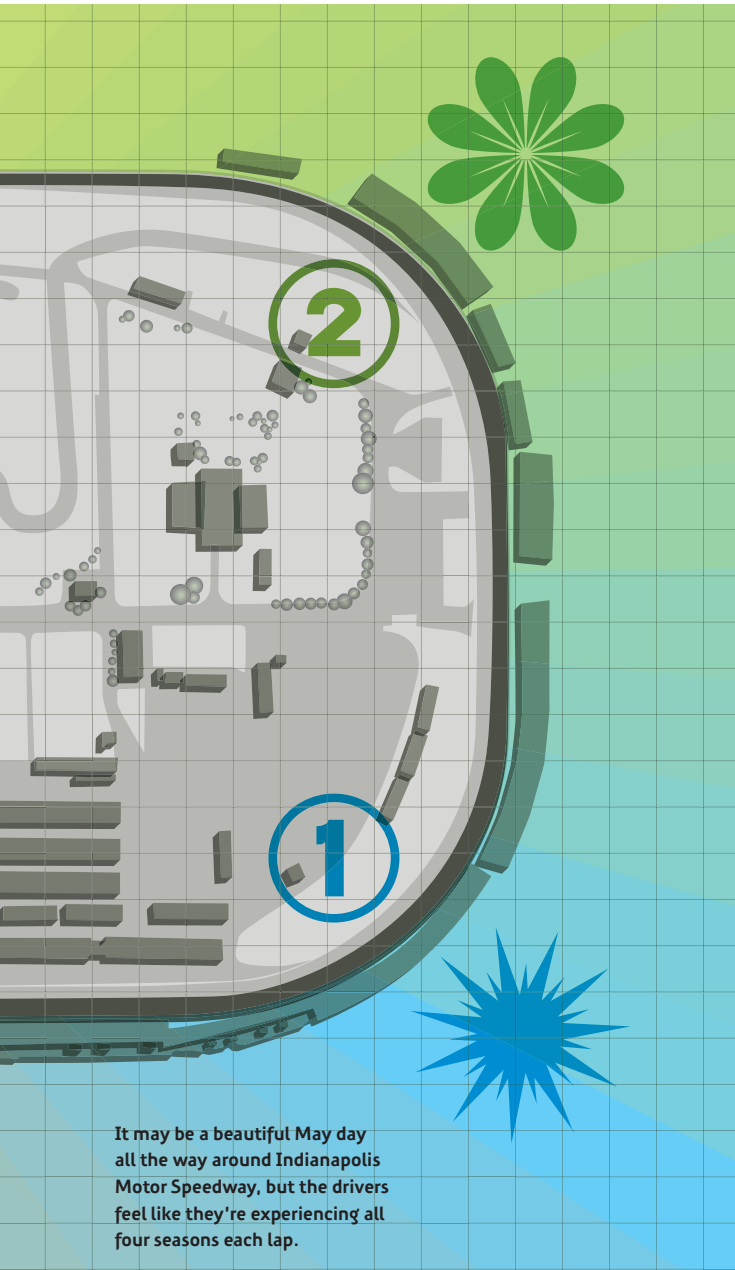
"People perceive the Indianapolis Motor Speedway as being symmetrical," says three-time Indy 500 winner Johnny Rutherford, who owes much of his success to learning and adapting to the idiosyncrasies and nuances of the racetrack. "It has four turns that are both the same radius and length. It has short straightaways that are banked the same, and the long 50ft-wide straightaways, which are

reputed to be five-eighths of a mile long. But each straightaway and each turn presents a different problem for the drivers."

"Lone Star JR's" voice rises as he illustrates a point that could unsettle a less-experienced driver and his or her car: "I learned a long time ago that the great difference between the short chutes is that the north end is one foot higher."

Rutherford's clarion call of how weather, time of day and the racing surface will conspire to bite back differently every day (practice, qualifying and race day) reaches the ears of drivers early in May. Buddy Rice, the 2004 Indianapolis 500 champion, has been an eager student. Like Rutherford, his success depends in part on finding the keys that unlock this high-speed playing field.

Rice, who made his debut on the 33-car starting grid in 2003, early on sought the



It may be a beautiful May day all the way around Indianapolis Motor Speedway, but the drivers feel like they're experiencing all four seasons each lap.



advice and knowledge of past champions about how to approach each day to best prepare for *the* day. A year later, he won the race from the pole position.

"The cars might be different, but the characteristics of that track, the weather and what happens as the month goes on, the ones with the experience – Rutherford, Unser, Mears and Foyt – they know what it takes," Rice says with homage to the old guard. "But you have to feel it first and then know what to ask them. Then they'll help you break it down.

"There are many different ways, because the place is so fast. The way the rules are set up and the way the track is built, you approach it completely different than any other one."

In their approach to the entire racetrack, Rice and Rutherford liken the distinctive turns to the seasons of the year.

(Main) In 2.5 miles, drivers race through spring, summer, winter and fall – metaphorically speaking. **(Top right)** The shadows in Turn 1 make it look cold and dark. **(Above right)** Lewis Strang, on the pole for the first 500 in 1911, studies a model of the track. **Surface aside, it's the same today.** **(Right)** Buddy Rice (left) and Johnny Rutherford compare notes in '04



Indianapolis Motor Speedway

Turn 1 winter
Dark, cold and unpredictable

"The wall is extended all the way down and the stands come all the way around, so it looks extremely dark as you go down in there," Rice says. "Because of the awning over the stands, the wind is swirling. There's a little elevation change before you drop down into Turn 1, and though it seems like it's the flattest corner, it has a bunch of ripple bumps through it that can upset the car.

"In my first start back in '03, I started a fair ways back. You go down in there and dirty, dusty stuff is flying everywhere. Your eyes are watering and it's super turbulent. When there are people in the stands, the whole thing looks smaller than in practice. It wouldn't nearly be so bad if it wasn't so ▶



PHOTO GALLERY
Indy through the ages
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Feel the speed

Qualifying at Indy means running on the edge

Qualifications for the Indianapolis 500 are like nothing else in racing. Four inch-perfect, timed laps around the 2.5-mile speedway in constantly changing weather and racing surface conditions are required to set the 33-car grid.

All bets – along with most of the aerodynamic grip on the 1525lb race cars – are off.

“When you have a lot of confidence in your car, it is quite hairy to drive because you don’t have any downforce, it’s moving around, and you’re trying to run

as fast as you can,” 2004 Indianapolis 500 champion Buddy Rice says. “And you’re thinking you have to do it consistently over four laps, not one lap. That’s what makes it so difficult.”

Thirty years ago, Tom Sneva was thinking about breaking the 200mph barrier – akin to running the first four-minute mile – in the blue and white No. 8 Norton Spirit McLaren-Cosworth.

“As most drivers understand, qualifying is more nerve-racking than the race,” says Sneva, who is credited with the first official 200mph lap. “Once you get by the start of the race, you can get settled and into a flow. In qualifying, you can’t afford any mistakes if you want to get the most out of the car. You have to feel what

the car is going to do in the time of day you’re going out. Because it’s four laps, if you go too far overboard you might have one quick lap, but then the rest of them fall off real bad.

“We guessed right on a lot of things and ran it on the ragged edge for four laps. We left it all out there.”

Come race day, after the first few turbulent laps, following a road map of sorts is prescribed.

“All four corners are different, so you need the car to be balanced the entire race,” two-time 500-Mile Race winner Helio Castroneves says. “As you approach the finish line, you’re happy that you completed one lap – until you realize you have 199 more to do...”

Dan Stryck/LAT

“It changes daily, it changes yearly, so you just have to go out and see what it holds for you”

Johnny Rutherford

visually daunting. I think that's what makes it so difficult.”

Says Rutherford: “Down the front straightaway you have the grandstands on both sides of the racetrack. So, as low as you're sitting, from your perspective Turn 1 is hiding down there. It disappears into a point and you get closer and closer and suddenly there it is, and you're either too high or too low. You have to acclimate yourself to getting into the turn.”



Turn 2 spring

Some fresh air and renewal

“Turn 2 has never been a problem unless you have a problem exiting Turn 1 and coming across the short chute,” Rutherford says. “It will multiply on you in Turn 2. It's just a matter of hitting your marks and getting through there.”

“You can usually go flat through Turn 2,” Rice adds. “This is dictated by the wind direction. Turn 2 is a little funny because it looks like you turn in early and the turn shortens up, but it doesn't. I think it's because of the suites above [the racetrack]. If you're flat in 2, you'll run that all the way into 3 with the wind at your back.”



Turn 3 summer

Sunshine and wide-open spaces

“Three is the second-quickest turn and the second-hardest turn,” Rice says. “The straightaway is really long and a lot of times the wind's blowing right up your back, so it's extremely difficult to get down in there. It changes every day. That's where you'll see a lot of people bottoming out. There are three or four spots with bumps – one just past turn-in, two right in the middle of the apex, and sometimes one on the exit.”

“What makes it unique is that it's wide open because you have pit [entrance] lane and everything else, so you can see all the way through the turn. You can move around. There is a lot more room for errors and for opportunities to pass. Get flat and you'll get a good run through the short chute into 4.”

Rutherford says Turn 3 is “very comfortable in comparison to Turn 1,” though he doesn't recommend hugging the inside.

“It has changed over the years from when you could run down on the apron,” he says. “The cars weren't affected by the grade changes. Now, you have to stay above the line to make the ground effects [the car's underbody aerodynamics] work properly.”



Turn 4 autumn

Harvesting a good lap and preparation for another

“I break it down from easiest to most difficult, Turn 4 being the easiest,” Rice says. “I'm not necessarily sure why, but a lot of people say the same thing. When you roll out of the pits for practice, most of the time you can usually run – not in qualifying trim, but in race trim and when you first get there – close to flat-out there right from the get-go. If you have problems there, though, you'll have problems everywhere.”

“Hitting your marks in 4 is important,” Rutherford adds. “There is one place at the head of the front straightaway that used to jut out maybe a foot. There have been drivers who misjudged that and scuffed the right sides on the wall coming out of Turn 4. Get out cleanly and you can catch your breath down the frontstretch.”

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway is far more complex than what meets the eye – from the four unique corners to the high-speed stretches, where opportunity and potential disaster are intertwined.

“If you're going to be successful at this place, you have put all these things together,” Rutherford advises. “And it changes daily, it changes yearly, so you just have to go out and see what it holds for you and act accordingly.”

“But some people never figure out what it is; they're just out there running around this 50ft-wide road that has four left turns....” ■

(Opposite) If Turn 1 is winter, the bright sunshine of the wide-open Turn 3 is the equivalent of summer

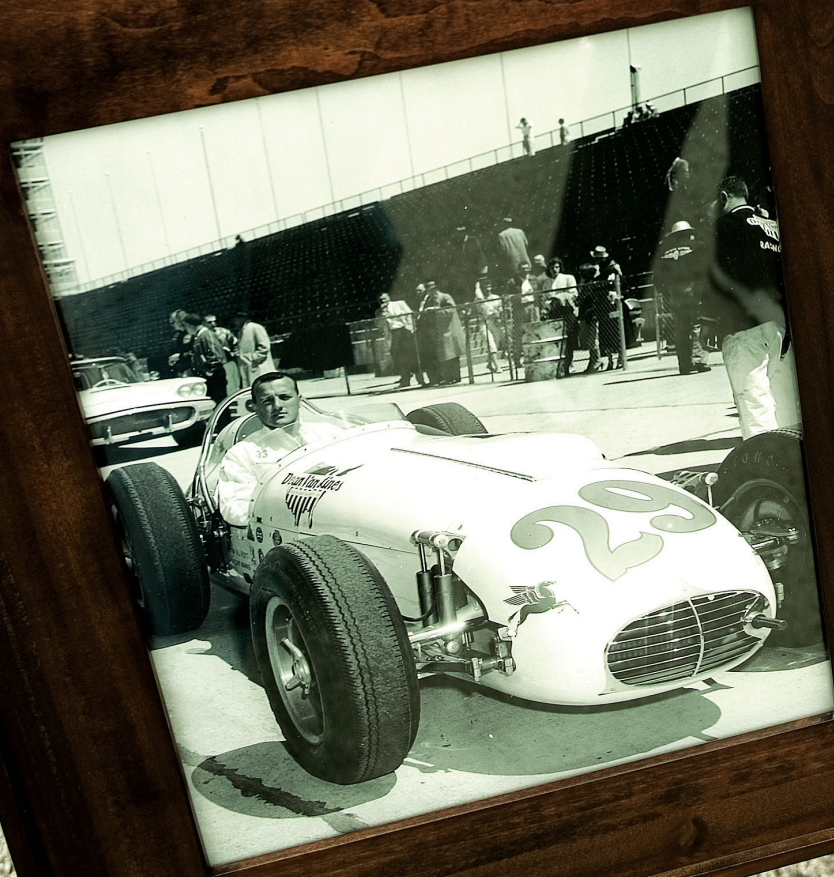


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Words by Richard S. James • Main photos by Michael Levitt/LAT, IMS Archive

ALL-AROUND GENIUS

His diversity is legendary, but A.J. Foyt's 50 years at Indy have defined him, as he has helped write the Speedway's history

He's challenged the best stock cars have to offer, and won the Daytona 500. He's taken on the elite of road racing, and claims a win at the 24 Hours of Le Mans. He's best known for tasting the milk four times in Victory Lane at Indianapolis after 500 miles of racing – once in a car he'd built – but he's won the Indy 500 as a car owner, too. And when the race is done, you'll find A.J. Foyt hard at work on his ranch in Hockley, Texas.

"You know, I'm not a tuxedo guy," says the imposing, yet affable Texan. "If I've got to wear a suit, I will, but I'm not the black tie type. I'm just A.J.; I'll never change."

"Just A.J." doesn't seem fit to describe a man with a list *this* long of accomplishments in

motorsports, who in 2007 marks his 50th anniversary in Indy car racing. And yet, "just A.J." is an almost-perfect fit for a man whom you're certain is always going to give it to you straight. (Lesson one from A.J.'s school of hard knocks: "Just tell the truth. Either people want to hear it or they don't. I've seen people who fake it and lie about things; sooner or later they've got to cover for it.")

A.J. Foyt certainly counts among the USA's greatest racing drivers, if he doesn't stand alone at the top of the heap. And although he retired his right foot from the go pedal in 1992 to concentrate on team ownership, he remains an iconic figure as the hands-on leader of the No. 14 ABC Supply car driven this year by

Darren Manning. In short, he's a living legend who has seen much in his 50 years in the sport.

A half-century of changes

When Foyt began, an Indy car was not too far removed from the dirt cars that would race at the DuQuoin, Ill., fairgrounds or countless other clay and dirt tracks across the country; quite often the only difference was tires. They were typically front-engine roadsters with carbureted Offenhauser engines. When he retired, the engines were turbocharged and fuel injected, now residing behind the driver. Tubeframes and steel bodies had been replaced with aircraft-grade aluminum and composites. Pole speeds at the Indy 500 had climbed from ▶

Portrait of the driver as a young man....

A.J. Foyt poses (opposite) with a portrait from his first Indy 500 in 1958. (Above) Foyt pulls his Travis-Offy into the winner's circle in 1961, the first of his four Indy 500 wins

Courtesy of IMS Productions

“Racing is all I’ve ever known. I don’t know what I’d do if I wasn’t racing and raising hell”

A.J. Foyt



just under 144mph to greater than 230mph. And the sport was safer.

“I think the biggest change I’ve seen in our sport is safety,” Foyt says. “I’m talking about fuel cells, I’m talking about tires and cars. And driver uniforms. When I qualified for Indy, for Dean Van Lines my first year, I qualified in a T-shirt. Firestone started giving us uniforms, but they were just regular cotton uniforms.”

The safety improvements have come with technological advancements, as have the improvements in speed. As he’s welcomed the decreased risk to life and limb a racing driver faces, he’s rolled with the changes in technology that the sport inevitably brings.

“That just comes. That’s like before my time when you look at racing and they had chain drives and things, that’s just the way the world

evolves,” Foyt says, coming about as close to philosophizing as he gets. “You look at the tires that Firestone made then and you look at the tires they make now. If someone had told them then that they’d be making tires like they are today, they’d have thought someone was crazy. It’s just like if you had told me before I retired that I would run Indianapolis wide open without backing off, I’d have had to say you’d have to go over to Conkle Funeral Home in Indianapolis and find me there [if I tried that]. Things change like that.”

Technology hasn’t made the racing any less fun, he says. He notes that factory-built race cars are easier to work on than those hand-built roadsters. He should know – he’s the last driver to win Indy in a car that he built, with a motor he assembled. That came in 1977, when he

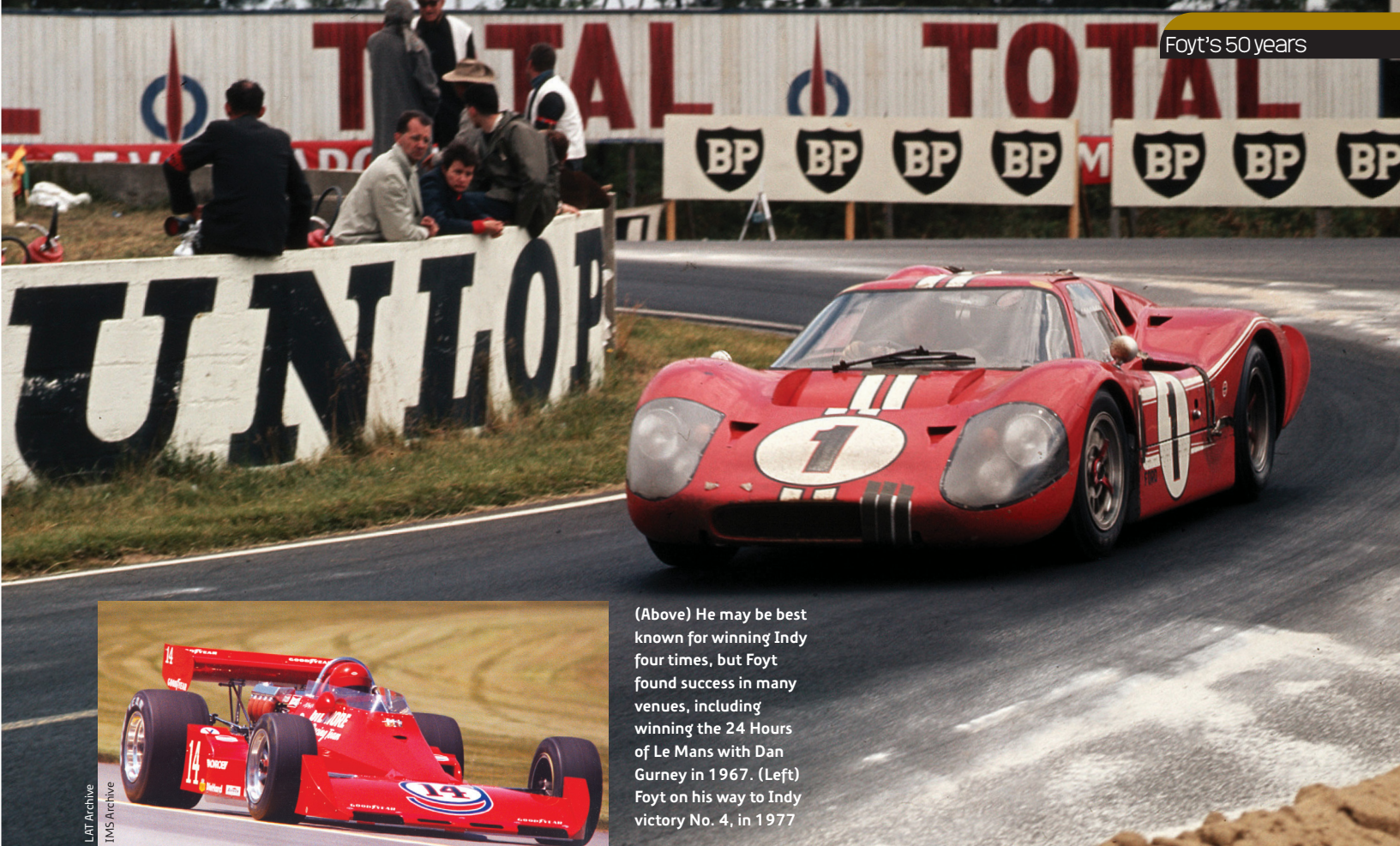
Foyt’s legacy of Indy car racing continues with family, including A.J. IV (above left), who has driven for his grandfather and now races for Vision Racing. Foyt returned to Indy’s winner circle as a car owner in 1999 with Kenny Brack (above right)

scored a fourth and final win in the Coyote-Foyt. “It makes me feel good that I’m probably the only one to win the Indy 500 with my car, my motor, and I drove it,” he says. “Pretty damn proud.”

Versatility makes the man

Indianapolis Motor Speedway and A.J. Foyt may be near synonymous, but his versatility was legendary as well. His last major wins came at the Daytona and Sebring sports car endurance races in 1985, adding to previous victories at the 24 Hours of Daytona in '83 and the 24 Hours of Le Mans in '67. He was also successful in stock cars, winning the Daytona 500 in '72, eight years after his first NASCAR victory at Daytona, plus a trio of USAC stock car championships.

“I guess I was fortunate enough to be able to



(Above) He may be best known for winning Indy four times, but Foyt found success in many venues, including winning the 24 Hours of Le Mans with Dan Gurney in 1967. (Left) Foyt on his way to Indy victory No. 4, in 1977



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A.J.'s Greatest Hits

Foyt's proudest moments came at the Indy 500

It should come as little surprise that A.J. Foyt, confronted with naming his favorite racing moments, comes up with a gaggle of events surrounding the Indianapolis 500.

"You don't know me from winning Pocono six times. I won about eight races at Daytona, the 24 Hours, the 125s. You don't know me from that. You don't know me from California, from Riverside. You don't really know me from Le Mans or Sebring," says Foyt, rattling off a list of storied racetracks where he has been victorious. "You know me from one race."

That race is, of course, the Indianapolis 500, a race for which Foyt first qualified in 1958 and went on to win four times, plus one more time as a car owner. It's the greatest spectacle in racing, so of course it occupies the top four spots in Foyt's scrapbook of great racing moments.

"My biggest moment – my father was in World War II, my mother worked in a hardware store while I was going to school – was for them to live to see me be the first four-time winner of the Indianapolis 500. To me it's still the biggest race in the world," he says.

"My first time ever qualifying for the Indy 500," says Foyt, citing his second biggest moment. "It's something that every race driver used to dream of, making the race. It was something that was very hard to do – there were from 75 to 100 cars and they'd be very close, and you had to be good enough to qualify."

Foyt says his next biggest moment was winning the race the first time. That's followed by winning it again. We didn't really feel the need to ask what his fifth biggest moment was....

adapt real quick," Foyt says. "It wasn't nothing I had to work for. We just fell in there and I was fast right off. It wasn't something I had to strive and practice for, and I can't tell you how I was able to do that. All I did was eat, sleep and live racing, so maybe that had something to do with it. But when I went into someone else's backyard, I had one thing in mind and that was try to beat them at their own game."

However, if it wasn't for his prowess on the dirt, you might never have heard of A.J. Foyt. He won his first race in a midget in his hometown of Houston in 1953. His first Indy car race came at Springfield in 1957, and he won his first Indy car race on the clay at DuQuoin, Ill., in 1960.

"My favorite car to drive was a half-mile dirt track sprint car," he explains. "They had a lot of power and were very, very fast. That was the fun of them. You're broadsliding, and you have to have an educated foot to drive that car."

His versatility went a long way toward his popularity. He notes he could have made a career in Formula 1, but the American crowds kept him racing in the States most of the time.

"I was an a**hole and they still liked me," he laughs. "I think the people knew I'd give it 110 percent when I raced. Didn't matter what it was, I'd run as hard as I possibly could. And money...I didn't care if it was a dollar or \$100,000, I'd still run just as hard. I think a lot of fans like that. And I spoke my piece, right or wrong. Nowadays, with big major sponsors, you kind of have to be quiet, be careful what

you do. A few of them speak out, but very few. I think that's what people liked about me."

Looking ahead

Now the man who holds the record for the most consecutive Indianapolis 500 starts as a driver (35) and as a driver and owner (50 this year) is taking a step back, turning over the operations of A.J. Foyt Racing to son Larry. The team has gone through a dry spell after winning the 1998 IndyCar Series championship and '99 500 with Kenny Brack, scoring only one win since. "I've been up and down that ladder like a yo-yo, so it's nothing new to be here," he says, gesturing low, "and here," gesturing high. "It's hard for me to live with when I'm down there, I'm a miserable b****d. But we will be back."

Manning turned in a top-five qualifying effort for Foyt in St. Petersburg, so good things may come to the team this year with its renewed effort. And Foyt can enjoy watching grandson A.J. Foyt IV on track, driving this year for Vision Racing. But whatever his level of involvement, he says he'll keep coming to the track for as long as he can.

"They all told me that I wouldn't live to be 22 years old, and I buried a lot of my friends who said that," he says. "What else is there in life? Racing is all I've ever known in my life. It was my dream all my life. I'm not really a golfer or a fisherman or anything like that, so I don't know what I'd do if I wasn't racing and raising hell." ■



Paul Webb/LAT



Paul Webb/LAT



Dan Streck/LAT



Words by Richard S. James • Main photo by Dan Streck/LAT

Behind every great driver...

The driver controls the car on the track, but there's a whole backstage crew that manages everything else

The driver gets the glory. He gets the wreath, he gets to drink the milk, and he receives the ridiculous oversized check. Or sometimes he gets the blame for a day gone wrong – a brush with the wall, lap times off the pace, leaving the pit stall before the fueler uncouples....

But there's a reason that racing is still called a team sport. Behind every driver, great or otherwise, there's a dedicated group of men and women working hard to get him or her to Victory Lane.

"We're the supporting cast for the guy who drives the car," says Mike Hull, Target Chip Ganassi Racing team managing director, and the man responsible for race day strategy for Scott Dixon's No. 9 Dallara-Honda. "He's the quarterback, he leads the team, he directs what we do on race day. You want to do

From top: Some of the backstage crew for Scott Dixon's performance are: Managing Director/Race Strategist Mike Hull and engineer Eric Bretzman on the timing stand; Barry Wanser, team manager, racing operations, here debating a point with an IndyCar Series official; Packy Wheeler, Dixon's extra set of eyes on the spotters' stand

everything in advance to give him what he needs to have the best day possible. Then we follow his lead."

Hull is one cog in the machine that can help make Dixon a hero or zero. Dixon controls the car to the best of his ability. Everything that isn't in his hands is under the jurisdiction of his Chip Ganassi Racing teammates. Their view from the pit wall, where plans are made, situations are reacted to and disasters are diverted, provides a unique perspective on the race.

Mike Hull Team managing director/race strategist

Hull is responsible for calling all aspects of the race strategy. That includes planning pit stops, at least as much as pit stops can be forecast.

"We have a specific plan in mind before we

start any race," Hull explains. "If it went to plan, we would always want to stop when the racetrack was full-course yellow, because it keeps the spacing on the track close with whoever we're racing. It also reduces the exposure that you have in the pit lane under green flag laps. Every time you pit under green, you could conceivably lose a lap that you might never get back.

"You try to determine the race strategy for yourself by working backwards. You race from the back end to the front. You always think about when you can be full to finish, when you're going to do your last stop, who you're going to be racing with, who's really good today. Those are the things that you try to keep the driver in the loop on, so he has all the information he needs to do his job. I think if you add all those things together, all those ingredients, you increase your opportunity to win the race."

At Indy, "you're racing six individual sprint races, and you're trying to make your car good



“We’re the supporting cast for the guy who drives the car. He’s the quarterback, he directs what we do on race day”

Mike Hull

for the last sprint race. You’re trying to get your guy in a position to be able to take advantage of the fuel load and the tires with a very small proportion of the race remaining.”

Glen “Packy” Wheeler Spotter

Packy Wheeler is Dixon’s eye in the sky, letting him know what’s going on around him and keeping an eye out for trouble ahead. At most races he works alone; at Indianapolis, due to the size of the track and the available sightlines, spotting is a two-person job and he’s up in Turn 1, watching from the exit of 4 to the entrance of 2.

“I’m just trying to watch traffic around Scott, more what’s behind him than what’s in front of him, although I do watch the traffic that’s way in front of him, monitoring the slower cars that he will want to avoid or use to pick someone else off. But more watching for stuff that happens, such as accidents or debris. Most of the calls are made from the pit boxes as far as strategy is concerned, so

I’m just helping to monitor things for Scott as the race goes on.

“Indy is different from any other track that we go to, for a lot of reasons. It’s the only place that I use a pair of binoculars to help pick him up because it’s such a large track. It’s the only track that we go to that you can’t see the whole track. You don’t get a good feel for it losing sight of him through the race.”

Barry Wanser Team manager, racing operations

If it has to do with the race cars, it’s Barry Wanser’s domain. He’s the in-between for the engineers and the race cars, taking charge of the mechanics. As far as Dixon is concerned, Wanser’s duties take place before the green flag – for the race, he’s in Dan Wheldon’s pit, helping Chip Ganassi call the race strategy for the No. 10 car. By that time, he’s overseen the building and preparation of the cars, choosing primaries and backups.

What’s going to help the team have a shot at winning the Indianapolis 500? “Going into

The perfect pit stop is a choreographed affair that is planned, practiced and analyzed. Dixon’s chief mechanic, Ricky Davis, is the guy on the right-front wheel gun

this year, it’s car preparation; having the guys raise their fitness level – which we did all winter; having perfect pit stops, especially when they count. I mean, they all count, but some count more than others, especially when you get toward the end.

“We cover the bases with all the guys, whether it’s ourselves with the strategy, with the engineering of the cars, with the pit stops, with the guys preparing the tires – everything is double checked, and we triple check some stuff. We spend a lot of time to win that race.”

Eric Bretzman Chief engineer

“We’re watching the telemetry quite a bit, and we can kind of tell what he’s dealing with by watching his steering trace, and we’ve got tire pressure sensors on our telemetry so we can see how the pressures are changing through a run. We listen to the driver and listen to where he thinks he’s better and where other drivers are better,” says Eric Bretzman, who engineers Dixon’s car before, and during, the race. ▶

VIDEO EXTRA

THE PERFECT PIT STOP

Scott Dixon and his crew hit their marks in St. Pete

Courtesy of IMS Productions

(Right) It seems simple enough: stop, fuel in, new tires, go; but watch the ballet required. (Below) When it all comes together, the team gets to celebrate together in Victory Circle



Dan Strecker/LAT

“If he’s going to pull away...he’ll run me over and hopefully I’m like a wheel chock”

Ricky Davis

“If everything has happened as it’s supposed to, he’ll have a quiet race. If the weather or track conditions have changed, he’s liable to be a busy man.

“We want to keep the mechanical package steady and underneath him when he loses downforce in traffic. But we also have to balance it out for when he’s running out front. If we add too much grip, too much downforce, too much drag, we’ll be too slow when we’re out front.

“If he’s got a little push, we can inflate the right-rear tire a little bit to help him rotate through the corner. If it looks like it’s a bigger aero problem, we can change the front wing; but that can be pretty sensitive at Indy, so you have to be real careful how much you increase it or reduce it.”

Ricky Davis

Chief mechanic and right-front tire changer

“My general responsibilities during the race are to make sure the crew guys have everything in place that they need, the tires are on the wall, the fueler’s ready at a moment’s notice for whatever the situation may be, and then wait to hear what the driver has to say,” says Ricky Davis, who not only is the chief mechanic on Dixon’s car, but also changes the right-front tire, before putting himself in harms way in front of and edgy, impatient race driver.

“I send the car out at the end of a pit stop, making sure the fueler’s out of the way and traffic is clear to send him. You’ve got a corridor – from the time he enters the pitbox is seven-and-a-half, maybe eight seconds

before he leaves. I’ve got to make the decision: Is the fueler out of the way? Is traffic clear and can we go or do we stay? And, hopefully, I make the right choice.

“I stand in front of the car, and if he’s going to pull away early, it’s going to be because he has a clutch problem. He’ll run me over and, hopefully, I’m like a wheel chock then, so that the fueler doesn’t get pulled over and we have a fire.”

Scott Harner

Team manager, administrative operations

They say an army moves on its stomach, and the same is at least partially true of race teams. Somebody has to make sure they eat, and are concentrating on the task at hand, not their growling stomachs. During the race, Scott Harner is spotting for Wheldon; but up to that point, he’s taken care of most of the team’s needs that aren’t connected directly to the race cars.

“As far as my end of it goes – logistics, personnel, equipment, those kinds of things – I make sure everything is where it needs to be. Barry takes care of everything from the race car side,” says Harner.

“Indianapolis is without question our Super Bowl. We obviously put a lot into it. Logistics, the things like how the crew gets to the racetrack every day, how they’re fed every day, how we communicate on the radios every day. On Pole Day, we actually bring people over from the shop to have in the garage, so if we have a problem we can get the cars turned around fast.” ■

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ONE IN



Ryan Briscoe is back. Not Ryan Briscoe the gangly, shy kid we remember from 2005, but Ryan Briscoe the grown-up, the one smartly positioned for the 91st Indianapolis 500. Ryan Briscoe, the very definition of a one-off, is set to tackle Indianapolis, the race that welcomes, encourages – and sometimes even rewards – one-offs.

Briscoe, who races full-time for Penske Racing's American Le Mans Series Porsche LMP2 squad, will return as part of Luczo Dragon Racing, a team led by Jay Penske and run by Jay Signore, the former director of the International Race of Champions (IROC) series. The team will lean on Team Penske, of course, leasing its equipment from the defending Indy 500 champs, but the crew and driver are specific – and limited – to this one race.

"I haven't even driven the car yet," Briscoe said, just days before practice began at Indy. "And, all of a sudden, it's just around the corner. The big thing for us is trying to keep things as simple as possible. I have to miss some days during the second week of practice and qualifying for an ALMS race, so we're going to have to be sure we build a good race car. The plan at the moment is to keep cool heads and not get too involved in the competition."

One-offs aren't unique to Indy, but they are a characteristic of the race, and this year is no exception. A handful of them – including those driven by Briscoe, Buddy Lazier and Stephan Gregoire – could be mixing it up with the IndyCar Series regulars, and it's likely that others will emerge in the days leading up to the race.

"There are different degrees of one-offs," says Lazier, who won the 500 in 1996 and will compete this year with Indy Pro Series big dog



Sam Schmidt's team. "The most ideal from a driver perspective is one that emerges from a multiple-car team, because the challenge of gathering information is the biggest one any team will face during the month. The one-offs that are a single-car effort have a whole different challenge. That's why having teammates is an advantage, even if you're only coming into it for one race."

It's also easier if you've been there before. This Indianapolis 500 will be the 15th for Lazier and the eighth for Gregoire. Regardless of how good the car, the experience of the driver trumps it. If the car is bad, an experienced driver knows not to try to get too much from it. If the car is good, he knows exactly what to do with it.

"If you have experience with the event, you have a slight advantage as a one-off," Gregoire says. "Sometimes when you don't have a good car, you feel like you have to push the issue and take more risks. But if you do that at Indy, you get in trouble very quickly. You need to understand



500

Words by Jeff Olson

One-off [wuhn-awf] -noun: 1. The act of assembling a team in order to compete in a single race, not an entire season. 2. Driving in one specified race, but not partaking in other related races.



Phillip Abbott/LAT

Michael Kim/LAT



PHOTO GALLERY [CLICK HERE](#)
Indy 500 one-offs who delivered

IMS Archive

One chance, and they took it

A look at some of the great one-offs of recent Indy 500 history

Al Unser, 1987. The vet arrived helmet in hand without a drive, and won the race in an extra Penske March that was on display in a hotel lobby prior to bump day.

Jim Rathmann, 1960. Only ran two other races – Milwaukee and a dirt race at the Indiana State Fairgrounds – the year he won the Indy 500.

Juan Pablo Montoya, 2000. His Ganassi Racing team was still running full time in CART, but this rookie's victory was the one-off that softened the barrier between the two series.

Hello Castroneves, 2001. Penske ran at Phoenix before the race, but began its transition to full-time IndyCar Series status by winning the first of three consecutive Indys in '01 with the Indy rookie.

Michael Andretti, 2006. He returned from a brief hiatus to compete at just Indy, and nearly stole it, finishing third.

Jim Clark, 1964-'66. The British invasion of the '60s took off big-time with Lotus man Clark's pole in '64, his win in '65 and a runner-up finish in '66.

Graham Hill, 1966. Following fellow Formula 1 driver Clark's lead, he won as a one-off effort in '66 with Lola.

patience at Indy, and in order to have patience, you have to have time on the track."

By definition, many of the team members on a one-off will be temporary hires, so another key to a good Month of May is a crew which gets rapidly, meaning no time is wasted in getting the most out of their car and driver.

"There are a lot of new people involved for the month," Briscoe says. "It will be a situation of trying to get everyone working together nicely. A lot of the guys have experience with Indy cars, but aren't currently working with them, so it's a matter of getting them comfortable. The first week will be the most important time. We're relying on help from Penske, but not entirely. There's going to be a lot for everyone to learn."

While it might not appear as if a one-off effort would have an advantage over established teams, the race itself offers one rather significant incentive to the independent operator: hours and hours of practice time. Teams will have nearly two full weeks – weather permitting – to practice, and most one-off teams see that time as precious.

"Sure, for any one-off, Indy is a good one to choose just because there's so much track time available before the race," Briscoe says. "Even though I'll have to miss a few days during the second week, hopefully I'll get enough track time during the first week to get comfortable and get the car in the race."

Money is also a constant difficulty for one-off teams, many of which are underwritten by the team owners. Gregoire is in just such a situation, as team owner Tom Chastain is expected to cover the majority of the costs, at least until a sponsor is found.

(Top left and far left) Buddy Lazier, winner of the Indy 500 in 1996, returns in a one-off race deal for what would be his 13th consecutive start. (Top) After a solitary Indy start in '05 (top right), Ryan Briscoe returns with Penske-spec stuff. (Above) Stephan Gregoire follows his dream for an eighth time. He returned to Indy in '06 after a four-year pause

IMS Photo

When Danny Ongais was injured in '87, Penske needed a new driver and car. Al Unser was tapped to take over, driving a March-Cosworth used as a display car – and won the race!

“Indy is a good one-off to choose just because there’s so much track time available before the race”

Ryan Briscoe

"Money is hard to find because of the economic environment," Gregoire says. "Corporations pay a lot of attention to where they put their money today. But I think it's easier now from a financial standpoint to put together a program than it was a few years ago, because the chassis are the same, the engines are the same, and you can borrow the resources of existing teams. If the equipment was new, it would be much harder financially."

The real bottom-line question is much more fun to speculate: Does a one-off have a chance to win the Indianapolis 500? Is a story like Al Unser's improbable 1987 win (see sidebar) possible in this day and age?

Gregoire pauses. True, it appears to be pretty much impossible on paper. But then again, a piece of paper never raced in the Indy 500.

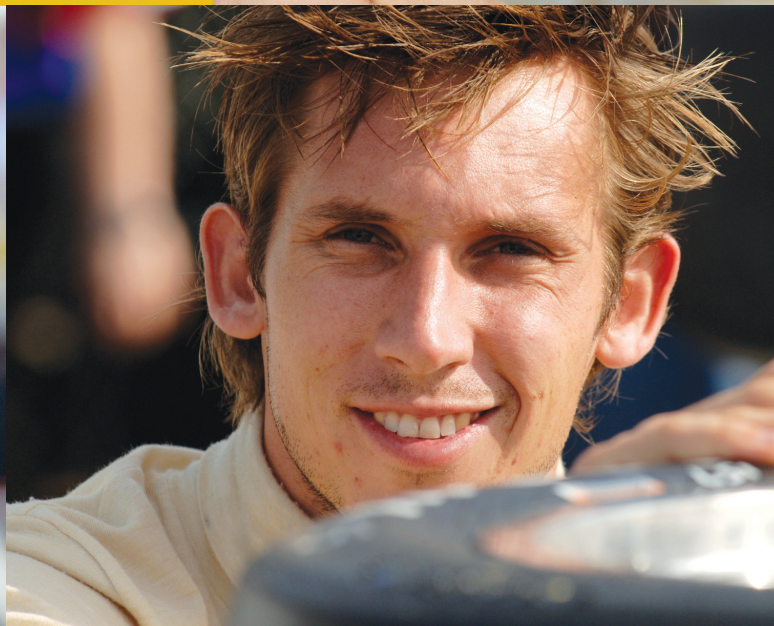
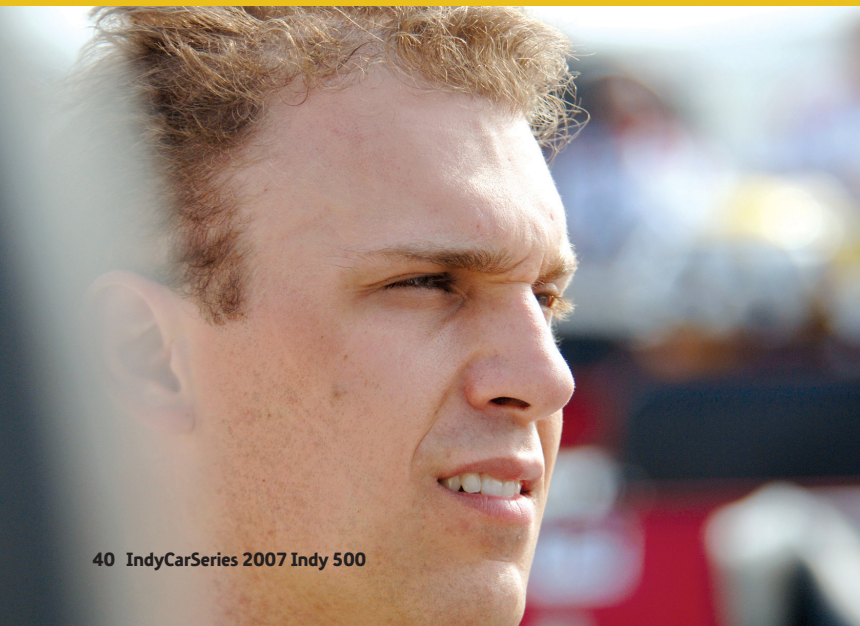
"You never know," he says with a sly smile. "You just never know..." ■



Words by Jeff Olson • Main photos by Paul Webb/LAT

THE FASTEST GUYS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF...YET

A swarm of rookies is mixing it up with the Indy Pro Series veterans. You may not know them now, but you will soon enough



The setting was an otherwise quiet pressroom at Homestead-Miami Speedway late one night in February after an Indy Pro Series test session. Kosuke Matsuura and Hideki Mutoh chattered quietly with Japanese reporters, being careful not to disturb two other reporters in the room.

Suddenly, the group erupted in laughter. "Sorry," Matsuura said to the two reporters once the laughing subsided. "I was telling a story."

After being assured he wasn't a bother, he was urged to repeat the story in English.

"Well," Matsuura said matter-of-factly, "Hideki washed his cell phones."

"He lost his cell phones?" one American asked, thinking something was lost in translation.

easier to live, but I really want to drive Indy cars, so I made the move. Hopefully I can drive a big car next year. That's my motivation. I don't care if the language is different or the culture is different. I just want to race."

He's not the only one, of course. Three other rookies – Robbie Pecorari, Stephen Simpson and Andrew Prendeville – are among the top 10 in the Indy Pro Series standings after three races this season. But Mutoh is the one who's made the most significant early splash, driving the No. 55 Panther Racing entry to a third place at Homestead, then a second and a fourth in two races at St. Petersburg.

Adjusting to ovals like Homestead and Indianapolis Motor Speedway, where the Indy

Mutoh (55) dices with Jaime Camara (11), Pablo Perez (10) and Sean Guthrie at Homestead, where he finished third

"If I stayed in Japan, it would be much easier to live, but I really want to drive Indy cars"

Hideki Mutoh



The Indy Pro Series' rookie class of 2007 includes some fast guys whose names you should take note of (clockwise from top left): Robbie Pecorari, Mike Potekhen, Hideki Mutoh, Stephen Simpson and Andrew Prendeville

"No," Matsuura grinned. "He washed his cell phones. He put them in the washing machine. Both of them. He had one cell phone for Japan and another one for the U.S. He forgot to take them out of his pockets and washed them with his laundry, and now he doesn't have any cell phones at all."

Mutoh grinned sheepishly and shrugged. "No phones," he said, garnering another round of laughter from the Japanese reporters.

Such is the transition for Mutoh, the hottest find among a new group of racers in the Indy Pro Series this season. He's learning a new language – and mastering it nicely in a short period of time – and adapting to a new culture while tearing up racetracks he's never seen.

"It's been really difficult, but I'm trying," he says. "If I stayed in Japan, it would be much

Pro Series will compete in the Freedom 100 on May 25, has been the most difficult aspect of Mutoh's transition.

"The ovals are so new to me," he says. "I have experience with road courses, but never drove an oval before. It's a new experience. It looks easy – just a circle – but when you drive hard and try to be fast, it's really difficult."

Here's a closer look at the other top newcomers in the series:

Robbie Pecorari

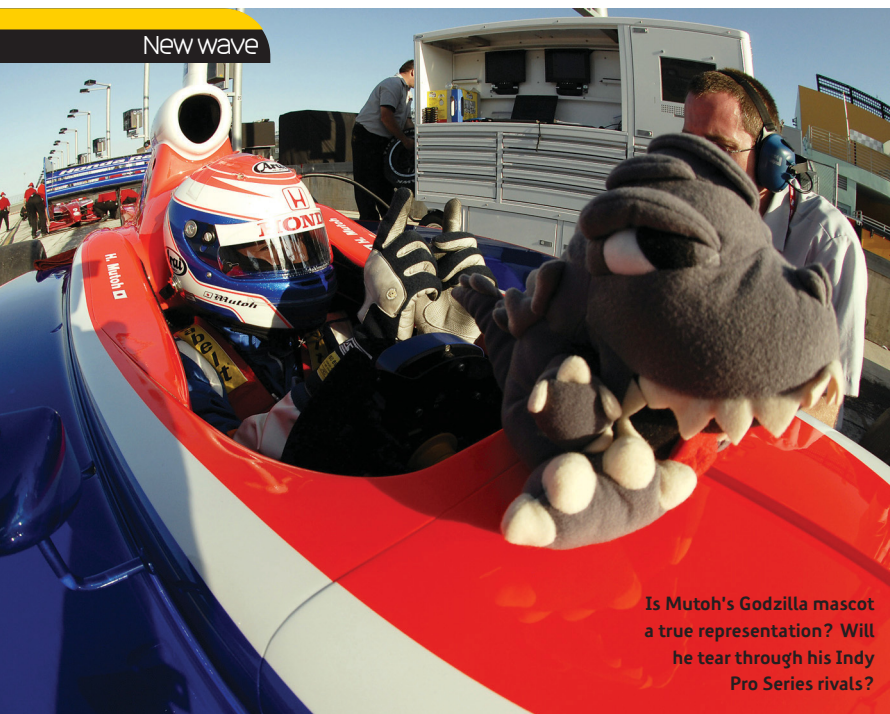
After moving from the Star Mazda Series in 2005 to Champ Car Atlantics in 2006 – where he won a race at Toronto – Pecorari joined Team KMA in the Indy Pro Series. Since then, he's finished among the top 10 in his first three races and ranks fifth in the standings.

"Right now the goal is to get comfortable with the car and to basically learn the car on the ovals, since it's pretty new to me," said Pecorari, a 19-year-old native of Aston, Pa. "As long as we get a couple wins, I think that would be a good season. If we could win the championship, that would be great. Only one driver gets to do it. That's everyone's goal."

Stephen Simpson

The 23-year-old South African was on a beach in Capetown when the call came. He was about to become the next driver for Kenn Hardley Racing and, oh, by the way, how fast can you get to Indianapolis?

When he arrived, Simpson was greeted by snow. Lots of it. Indianapolis had just received 16 inches, and the temperature was 15 degrees. ▶



Is Mutoh's Godzilla mascot a true representation? Will he hear through his Indy Pro Series rivals?



Walt Kuhn/LAT

“As long as we get a couple wins, that would be a good season”

Robbie Pecorari

He spent his first night trapped in a hotel, but later navigated his way to the Hardley shop.

“This is a great team and a great championship,” Simpson says. “I’m really looking forward to a good year. Considering a few weeks ago I was on a beach in South Africa, to be here in a car is good. We’ve got a lot of work still to do, a bit more time to find, but I’m looking forward to a successful season.”

Andrew Prendeville.

After finishing second in the Formula Ford 2000 championship with three victories and nine podium finishes in 2004, Prendeville found a ride with RLR Andersen Racing for the 2007 Indy Pro Series season. The 26-year-old New Jersey native is looking forward to racing at Indy.

“It will be a dream come true to get the chance to compete at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway,” he said. “I’ve been to four or five Indy 500s, and before that I watched them on TV. It’s always been a dream of mine to run at the Speedway. It’s an opportunity I jumped on. The series is very organized. I’ve been impressed with everything so far.”

Mike Potekhen

He competed in five Indy Pro Series races last year for Part Sourcing International while finishing fourth in the Star Mazda championship. The 27-year-old Coloradoan has

a long history of success in Star Mazda and Formula Ford, which eventually led to his current ride with Apex Racing, the same team with which he raced last year in Star Mazda.

“It was tough last year stepping in and doing a couple of races at the end of the season when everyone had the momentum going. Steve Eppard at SWE did a ton for me last year putting me in the car, but we were definitely underfunded. Having this year with a proper budget and the team up and running before the first race and being able to do some proper testing, I think we’re going to be really competitive.”

So does Mutoh, who’s thrilled to be where he is. After two years in the Japanese Formula 3 championship and another in Formula Nippon and the Super GT championship, he finds himself among the leaders in a series that has advanced drivers like Marco Andretti, Jeff Simmons, Ed Carpenter and A.J. Foyt IV to the IndyCar Series.

“I think I’m doing all right so far,” he says. “I think the race at Homestead I could have won if I’d had 10 more laps. I didn’t push myself too hard. I could have won, but it didn’t happen. The team gave me a really good car, and I just did what the team said. I’m still learning.”

As for the phones, Mutoh still grins sheepishly when recalling the story. “I was tired after a long trip,” he said. “I came home from the gym and was so tired I couldn’t think. I left them in my pockets and threw them in with the laundry. I had to buy two new phones, and for two weeks I was only available on e-mail and the Internet. It was hard, but I made it.”

True that. Hideki Mutoh – and a handful of other new names in the Indy Pro Series – certainly have arrived. ■

A sense of Freedom

The Indy Pro Series drivers’ biggest stage

No question about it: Winning the Freedom 100 can be a major career boost. After Ed Carpenter’s runaway victory in the first Indy Pro Series race at Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 2003, the doors opened to bigger things.

And, while the other three winners of the Freedom 100 – Thiago Medeiros, Jaime Camara and Wade Cunningham – are still awaiting their big breaks, they are high on the list of car owners preparing to sign the latest phenom, and they’re held in high esteem by the drivers who want to follow them.

Knowing the effect of winning at the Speedway, the newcomers are clamoring for their chance this year. They’re listening – both to teammates and fellow competitors – about the quirks and traits of IMS, and they’re ready to give it their best shot.

“The team is always quick at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, so I’m looking forward to experiencing a quick car there,” says Logan Gomez, an 18-year-old rookie who will drive for Sam Schmidt. “I hear it’s a hard track, so I’ll be spending a good part of the day just working up the courage to go flat-out throughout the track.”

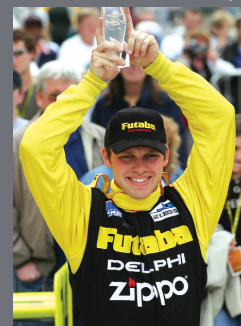
At least 14 newcomers will take to the famous 2.5-mile oval May 25 for the fifth Freedom 100, including the latest sensation, Japanese rookie Hideki Mutoh. He’s second in points after three races, trailing only triple winner Alex Lloyd.

“I’m really looking forward to Indianapolis,” Mutoh says. “I’ve spoken to my engineer, and we’re really focused to win there. It’s a such a big track with a long straight. I think it will be quite fun.”

The other newcomers at Indy include Robbie Pecorari, CR Crews, Stephen Simpson and Andrew Prendeville – all of whom are among the top 10 in Indy Pro Series points after the first three races of 2007.

Gomez, who tested well but finished 15th in the season opener at Homestead-Miami Speedway, says the poor performance there gives added incentive for Indy.

“To have such a bad race like we did, I feel I really need to redeem myself,” he says.



Ed Carpenter parlayed his 2003 Freedom 100 win into a ride with Vision Racing in the Indy Car Series

Michael Levitz/LAT

PRO SERIES @
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Miami 100

Homestead-Miami Speedway, March 24
57 laps/85.5 miles



- Alex Lloyd passed polesitter Chris Festa in Turn 3 on the first lap.
- Wade Cunningham assumed the lead on lap 16, and Festa moved into second shortly thereafter. Cunningham spun out of the lead on lap 22 and hit the SAFER Barrier. Debris from the accident took Ryan Justice out of the race as well.
- Lloyd took the lead again from Festa on the restart after the Cunningham yellow.
- A frightening accident occurred on lap 45 when Pablo Perez and Sean Guthrie made contact while running side by side. Guthrie hit the wall and Perez went airborne, his car shredding to bits on the catch fence. Micky Gilbert, Joey Scarrow and Shane Lewis were halted by debris. Perez was transported to Jackson Memorial Hospital with orthopedic injuries to both legs that required extensive reconstructive surgery.
- The accident effectively ended the race, as it was shortened by 10 laps to allow repairs to the catch fence and concluded under yellow. Alex Lloyd claimed the first IPS victory of 2007.

DRIVER	TEAM
1. Alex Lloyd	Lucas Oil/Isilon Systems/SSM
2. Chris Festa	CGR Indy Pro Series
3. Hideki Mutoh	Panther Racing
4. Jaime Camara	Osofresh
5. Andrew Prendeville	RLR/Andersen Racing

Pole winner: Chris Festa, 187.280mph

He said it: "It was just a really unfortunate thing to happen after our car had been so perfect all day. I want to send my best thoughts to Pablo [Perez] and his team. I don't really know exactly what caused the accident. We were both racing pretty aggressively, side by side, and got together." **Sean Guthrie**

FULL RACE RESULTS @
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Grand Prix of St. Petersburg - Race 1

Streets of St. Petersburg, March 31
40 laps/72 miles



- Alex Lloyd led the field from the green.
- The first caution came out on lap 2 when second-place qualifier Phil Giebler and fifth starter Matt Jaskol made contact and spun in Turn 1 and then Jaime Camara hit the wall in Turn 8. Jaskol completed the race a lap down.
- Lloyd and Jay Howard made slight contact on the second restart on lap 18, allowing Hideki Mutoh to slide into second place.
- Mutoh could never challenge Lloyd, and Lloyd took his second victory in as many races.

DRIVER	TEAM
1. Alex Lloyd	Lucas Oil/Isilon Systems/SSM
2. Hideki Mutoh	Panther Racing
3. Jonathan Klein	TNR-extreme Coil Drilling
4. Stephen Simpson	Ken Hardley Racing
5. Jay Howard	SpeedWorks

Pole winner: Alex Lloyd, 96.514mph

He said it: "I'm just ecstatic to give Tom Wood and Mark Moore their first podium. It was a tough race. Other people were defending, dicing and racing hard, and I just wiggled my way around everyone with a few quality passes on the outside." **Jonathan Klein**

FULL RACE RESULTS @
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Grand Prix of St. Petersburg - Race 2

Streets of St. Petersburg, April 1
40 laps/72 miles



- The top six from the first race were inverted on the starting grid for Sunday's race, leaving Bobby Wilson on pole and winner Alex Lloyd starting in sixth.
- Jonathan Klein made an bold move from fourth to first in Turn 1 on the first lap.
- Lloyd inherited the lead on lap 20 after Klein was black flagged for blocking.
- Lloyd became the first Indy Pro Series driver to win the first three races.

DRIVER	TEAM
1. Alex Lloyd	Lucas Oil/Isilon Systems/SSM
2. Wade Cunningham	Automatic Fire Sprinklers, inc.
3. Bobby Wilson	Ocala Gran Prix
4. Hideki Mutoh	Panther Racing
5. Robbie Pecorari	Cabo Wabo Tequila

He said it: "I can't put it into words. What a start to the year. I hoped we could get two; I thought two would be a fantastic start." **Alex Lloyd**

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Driver Standings After three of 17 races

Rank	Driver	Points
1	Alex Lloyd	155
2	Hideki Mutoh	107
3	Bobby Wilson	91
4	Chris Festa	83
5	Robbie Pecorari	80
6	CR Crews	70
7	Wade Cunningham	68
8	Jaime Camara	63
9	Stephen Simpson	61
10	Andrew Prendeville	60
11	Jay Howard	56
12	Mike Potekhen	53
13	Jonathan Klein	53
14	Joey Scarrow	46
15	Brad Jaeger	46
16	Ken Losch	44
17	Logan Gomez	42
18	Jon Brownson	42
19	Tom Wieringa	37
20	Micky Gilbert	36
21	Sean Guthrie	32
22	Phil Giebler	32
23	Matt Jaskol	29
24	Richard Antinucci	26
25	Tom Wood	13
26	Pablo Perez	12
27	Shane Lewis	10
28	A.J. Russell	7
29	Ryan Justice	5

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BLAST FROM THE PAST

INDY 500 STATS @ www.indycar.com

Polar exploration

Pole three-peat is a voyage into the unknown

One of the enduring legends of the Indianapolis 500 is that nobody has won the race in three consecutive years. You knew that, right? But did you know that nobody has won the pole three years running, either? Nine drivers have put their car on the point two years in a row, but a three-peat eluded them all.

First guy to earn consecutive poles was Ralph DePalma (1920-'21), with Rex Mays matching the feat in 1935-'36. After that, the repeaters were Eddie Sachs ('60-'61), Parnelli Jones ('62-'63), Mario Andretti ('66-'67), A.J. Foyt ('74-'75), Tom Sneva ('77-'78), Rick Mears ('88-'89) and Scott Brayton ('95-'96). Tragically, a practice crash claimed the life of Brayton in '96, meaning rookie Tony Stewart would start the race from the No. 1 spot.

Unique in auto racing, pole for the Indy 500 is earned by running four consecutive laps of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. That's 10 miles and 16 testing corners, where the tiniest waver from the perfect line can mean the

difference between pole and two weeks of dwelling on what might have been. But ultimate consistency doesn't necessarily equate to pole position. In 1992, Bobby Rahal's four qualifying laps in his Lola-Chevy were covered by just 0.006sec, the smallest spread ever, yet were still only good enough for a 224.15mph average and 10th in the starting lineup. In contrast, polesitter Roberto Guerrero had monstered his Lola-Buick to a four-lap average of 232.48mph.

But no talk of Indy 500 pole winners is complete without a look at Mears' amazing career stats. Not only does Mears hold the record for most pole positions (six - 1979, '82, '86, '88-'89 and '91), his 11 front-row starts, including six consecutive ('86-'91), looks unlikely to be bettered. His worst starting position was 22nd in 1981, when an engine vibration in his primary car forced him to abort his pole attempt and make the field as a second-day qualifier. Yep, even Mears had his bad days at the office....



IMS Archive

(Main) Polesitter Ralph DePalma (car No.4) gets ready to lead the field away in the 1921 Indy 500. Despite this being his second-straight pole at the Brickyard, DePalma converted neither into a win to add to his 1915 triumph. (Above) Parnelli Jones's '62 pole, the first of his "pole-peat," raised the qualifying bar to a 150.37mph average



Buddy Rice on baseball

Favorite batter

"On the Arizona Diamondbacks, Orlando Hudson is awesome. Ichiro Suzuki (Mariners) is really good, too. Albert Pujols (Cardinals) is a clutch hitter. It depends on the situation. There are a lot of good batters."

Favorite pitcher

"I like Dontrelle Willis (Marlins) a lot, and Mike Mussina (Yankees) is really fun to watch."

Favorite fielder

"There are a lot of really good infielders, but that man Derek Jeter (Yankees) is still hard to beat. In the outfield, I'll go for Eric Byrnes for the Diamondbacks, because he really puts so much energy and effort into everything he does."

World Series prediction

"I think it's going to take another few weeks until everybody starts lining themselves up, but whether you like them or not, the Yankees will be in the mix in the American League. In the National League, I'm always going to cheer for the D'backs. I've been following them since they came to Arizona."



Tomas Scheckter, barbecue master



"Barbecues are very popular in South Africa and they can get pretty intense. I like to keep it simple and mainly stick to steaks. It's best to flavor them first, and I'll typically tenderize them with some salt, pepper, garlic, etc. Sometimes I'll try different kinds of spices and marinades, just depending on what I'm in the mood for."



"It all starts there, with the flavor. I work the rub into the steaks and, if there's time, store them in an airtight container in the refrigerator overnight. That allows the flavor to really soak in. From there, just barbecue it up, made to order and serve. There's nothing to it."

"I once made steaks for the team [Vision Racing], and they didn't complain, so I must be doing something right. But the best barbecue is when someone else makes it for you."

Helio Castroneves. He's a funny guy!

Name three people you'd like to be trapped in an elevator with

"Steven Spielberg, President Bush and Chris Rock. We could watch movies, solve the world's problems and laugh a lot."

If you were President for a day, what would you do?

"I'd be stuck in an elevator with Steven Spielberg, Chris Rock and Helio Castroneves..."

IF I HAD A MILLION BUCKS... SCOTT SHARP

"The responsible side of me would give it to my children, so they would be set for awhile. The pleasurable side would quickly rent the biggest yacht I could find and cruise the Caribbean for as long as possible."



Michael Levitz/LAT

Garvin Lawrence/Getty Images

Danica Patrick's favorite things

Shopping as a sport, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, chocolate, Chicago and the Indy 500 tick some of the boxes

Favorite CD this very moment – and ever?

"My favorite now is probably the Jay-Z 'Kingdom Come' CD. Everybody thinks I say that because I was in his video, but that's not true. It's because it's good. I've always liked him; that's why I did the video. Favorite ever is Alanis Morissette 'Jagged Little Pill.' Loved it; still do."

Favorite movie?

"I really liked *Moulin Rouge*. But I'm all over comedy. Any Adam Sandler is really funny. I really like comedies, but every now and then there's a good drama."

Favorite book?

"Did you say magazine? I don't read books."

Favorite racetrack?

"That's easy. Indianapolis. It's the biggest race of the year and there are the most people and it's all exciting."

Favorite racing moment?

"I've been asked plenty of times if I actually heard the crowd when I took the lead back over at the Indy 500 in '05. I'm sure that would have been one of my favorites right there if I could have heard the crowd. But it was one of the most relieving moments because I knew I should have been in the lead."

Favorite sport outside of racing?

"Is shopping a sport? But other than that, any sport that I know someone in. I think football is the most entertaining to watch, but I know more people in baseball. So I like to see how all my friends are doing."

Favorite sports personality?

"I really like Peyton Manning. That would be something that a lot of people would say, because he is great. And he *is* great. He's really nice, and he's hilarious. He's just the same in person as he is on TV."

Favorite U.S. city?

"I love Chicago. It's a huge town with a small-town feel. Everybody's nice and it's clean and it has everything you could ever need. I also like Napa (Calif.); it has some good stuff in it."

Favorite time of the day?

"Most people would say otherwise, but I like getting up in the morning. The sun is just coming up, getting a cup of coffee and setting up your day. It's the only time of the day that's all yours. I like waking up, whatever time that is."

Favorite waste of time?

"Watching TV."

Favorite late-night talk show host?

"I don't even have to answer that one. Everybody should already know my answer, especially because he's already had me back on his show even now that I'm not on his team. So that's an easy one...*Letterman*."

Favorite vacation spot?

"I haven't been to enough places yet to know my favorite. More and more, home is becoming like a vacation."

Favorite indulgence?

"Chocolate. I don't think I have to elaborate."

Favorite ice cream flavor?

"Anything that has lots in it. When I make salads, they have everything under the sun in them – sweet, salty, sour, everything. So any kind of ice cream that has many ingredients is my favorite. And I'm big on textures. I like a little crunch."

Favorite dress and shoe designer?

"Gucci dresses. Louis Vuitton shoes."

Favorite gadget?

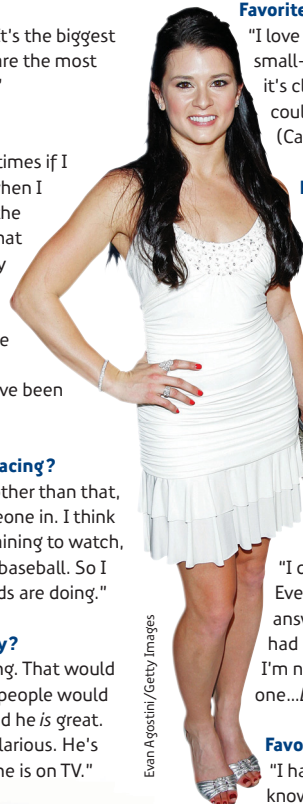
"I'm not a gadget girl. A phone with Internet, that's what matters. My Motorola Q is my favorite gadget because that's the only gadget I have."

Favorite subject in school?

"I liked cooking and gym class, and that's about it."

Favorite road car?

"I have a Lamborghini Gallardo. It's hot and mildly practical. I can get groceries in the car. I'm not saying it's easy; I can't have a passenger. But I can do it. It's the only car I have right now. I don't have any other options."



Evan Agostini/Getty Images








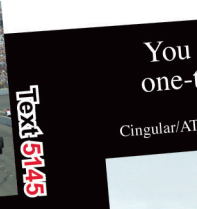




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