

Indianapolis 500: Mario Andretti, other legends pick their favorite cars

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Oh to be alone inside Indianapolis Motor Speedway's Hall of Fame Museum when the lights go off and the sun goes down. Gentlemen, start your bench racing.

Through June 1, some of the most distinguished cars in U.S. motorsports history are gathered inside, a collection of 67 Indianapolis 500-winning machines positioned next to one another in rows of greatness. If only they could talk, they would certainly compare stats, drivers and the conditions under which they competed. They would dream of racing one another in groups of 33 in a shootout among the best of the all-time best.

The lineup comes from all eras of the event, which celebrates its 100th anniversary in May. There is the Marmon Wasp—nicknamed “yellow jacket” because of its long, pointed tail—that Ray Harroun drove to win the first 500, in 1911. On the other side of the room is the most recent of Helio Castroneves's three winners, a Dallara that pulled away from Dan Wheldon in the closing laps in 2009.

All nine Unser family wins are present, along with the only four cars to win consecutive races: Wilbur Shaw's Boyle Special Maserati (1939, 1940), Mauri Rose's Blue Crown Spark Plug Special (1947, 1948), Bill Vukovich's Fuel Injection Special that nearly went three-for-three between 1952 and 1954 and the Belond Special that Sam Hanks won with in 1957 and Jimmy Bryan drove to victory lane the next year.

The display includes all of Roger Penske's collection and virtually every winning car since 1938. All pristine, all special—Indy's field of dreams.

“I can't wait to see it,” said three-time winner Johnny Rutherford, who piloted two of the machines on display (his 1976 car is not there). “It's truly special to see those cars.”

In honor of the exhibit, we polled five Indy winners recently about their favorite steeds—other than their own, of course. Generations of fans love many of the same ones.