



20 May 2013

For release: Tuesday, 21 May 2013

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Munoz celebrated as 39th Fastest Rookie

INDIANAPOLIS – The youngest driver ever to start the Indianapolis 500 from the front row was honored today (Tues, May 21) by the American Dairy Association of Indiana as recipient of the 39th annual Fastest Rookie of the Year Award.

Carlos Munoz, 21, from Bogota, Colombia, captured the honor when he qualified for the 500 on Saturday, May 18 at a four-lap average speed of 228.342 mph. He starts next Sunday's race from the middle of Row One in the No. 26 Unistraw Chevrolet for Andretti Autosport.

Munoz received a \$5000 cash award, a plaque, a custom commemorative poster, and a handmade set of "Winners Drink Milk" racing flags. His name has been added to the American Dairy Association's Fastest Rookie trophy on permanent display at the Speedway's Hall of Fame Museum.

The by-invitation-only event, held at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway's Plaza Pavilion, was attended by over 300 representatives of the nation's dairy industry, members of the racing fraternity, and local, national and international media.

THE GUEST OF HONOR. Munoz is a Colombian native who will pull "double-duty" this weekend: competing in both the Firestone Indy Lights Freedom 100 on Carb Day, and in his first Indianapolis 500 on Sunday. He is coming off a successful Firestone Indy Lights season, scoring two wins last year, at Edmonton and Fontana.



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He began his motorsports career in karting in 2002. In 2007, he made his debut in single-seaters, racing in the Formula TR Pro Series.

In 2008, Munoz participated in the Italian Formula Renault 2.0 and Eurocup Formula Renault 2.0 Championships. The following season, he competed in both the Eurocup Formula Renault 2.0 and Formula Renault 2.0 West European Cup championships.

Munoz also competed in the F3 Euroseries in 2010 and 2011, prior to advancing to Firestone Indy Lights.

Three other rookies made this year's field and also were recognized at the luncheon: **AJ Allmendinger**, Los Gatos, California; **Tristan Vautier** of Corenc, France, and Noblesville, Indiana's **Conor Daly**.

Five former Fastest Rookie award recipients qualified for this year's 500: **Marco Andretti, JR Hildebrand, Tony Kanaan, Scott Dixon, and Josef Newgarden**.

GREAT TRADITIONS. The Fastest Rookie of the Year Award is one of the Speedway's longest-running programs under the same sponsorship since its inception, and one of two programs that continues the long association between the Hoosier dairy industry and the Speedway. The bottle of milk presented to the winner of the 500-mile classic has been a traditional part of the Victory Lane celebration for nearly 80 years. The legendary Louis Meyer, Indy's first three-time winner (1928, '33, '36) is acknowledged as the driver who began the tradition by requesting a cold glass of buttermilk after his victory in 1933.

Following his win in '36, Meyer was photographed drinking milk in Victory Lane. Milk was presented off and on during the next several years until, in 1956, the bottle of milk was made a permanent part of the post-race ceremony by Indianapolis Motor Speedway owner Tony Hulman. 2013 marks the 58th consecutive year for the Bottle of Milk tradition.

Hosts for Tuesday's luncheon were Milk Promotion Services of Indiana (MPSI) president **Donald Gurtner** of Fremont, Indiana; vice president **Paul Mills** of Ossian; treasurer **Steve Phares** of Albion; Haubstadt's **Anita Schmitt**, secretary, and MPSI general manager **Deb Osza** of Lapel.

MPSI board members **Duane Hill** of Fountain City and **Ken Hoeing** of Rushville will represent Indiana's dairy farmers in Victory Circle on Race Day, awaiting the winner of the 500-Mile Race with the beloved, ice-cold Bottle of Milk. Both attended Tuesday's event.

Vince Welch, motorsports commentator for ABC-TV and ESPN, emceed the luncheon for the 15th consecutive year. Among guests were Indianapolis Motor Speedway chairman of the board **Mari Hulman George**; Hulman & Company CEO **Mark Miles**; Indianapolis **Mayor Greg Ballard** and First Lady **Winnie Ballard**; Indiana Department of Agriculture director **Gina Sheets**; Speedway historian and Motorsports Hall of Fame member **Donald Davidson**; 2013 Indiana Dairy Princess **Annie Rose Achen** of Ambia; 500 Festival Queen **Allison Jacob**; three-time Indy winner **Johnny Rutherford**, and **Louis Meyer Jr.**, son of the first three-time 500 champion.

Board vice president Paul Mills entertained guests for the seventh consecutive year with a heartfelt rendition of “Back Home Again in Indiana” to bring the luncheon to a close.