

50-plus years at Indy: A conversation with three generations of Andretti IndyCar drivers

May 24, 2016

By Rich Nye, WTHR sports anchor

WTHR.com

INDIANAPOLIS -

In celebration of the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500, I sat down to interview three generations of the Andretti racing family – 1969 Indy 500 winner Mario, his son and IndyCar team owner Michael and grandson and current racer Marco. The three of them have combined to lead 1,128 laps in the Indy 500, but the family has just one victory. Here is a large portion of our conversation on the Andretti legacy and luck (or lack thereof) at Indy.



US Presswire, 2011

RICH NYE: "The Andrettis have been racing now in Indianapolis for over 50 years of the 100 Indianapolis 500s. What's that legacy mean, Mario?"

MARIO ANDRETTI: "As they say time flies. A lot has happened since. A lot of good things have happened to us. For me, it's a lot of pride obviously, because it's almost like continuing the family business, especially when they're successful and

enjoying what they're doing. We're competitive. Yes, we only have one trophy to show for it, but they know we were here. You look at the amount of laps that Michael led and Marco and myself. We can be very happy and proud with that."

RICH: "People say the Andrettis are unlucky in Indianapolis. Is that true?"

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: "I don't know what it is. There's something. It's unexplainable, because I'll go to a place like Toronto where I've won seven times there. There's no reason I won seven times there. I didn't race any stronger at Toronto than I did here at

Indianapolis. In fact, I think I was even stronger here at Indianapolis. I don't know what you want to call it, but there's definitely something."

RICH: "So Marco, the three of you together have led 1,128 laps here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Grandpa just said one win. Does that leave you guys disappointed, or do you look at the success you've had?"

MARCO ANDRETTI: "I think it leaves us hungry. Only one of those laps counted. If I lead one lap I'd be happy if it's the right one, so we've been extremely dominant as a team, as a family. There's one thing left to do here, I think for myself and my career."

MARIO: "It's unfair, but many times your career is judged based on the performance here. That's unfair. In my opinion there are many great drivers that have never won and they obviously were able to, but there were other reasons. That's what puts the pressure on you. When I won, the biggest thing for me when I got that checkered flag was a big weight lifted off my shoulders."

RICH: "So is that weight still there Michael, or when you won it as owner a couple times, has that lifted it at all?"

MICHAEL: "It's different. I think it's something that I'll always miss. For whatever reason, that wasn't in my master plan for my life. That's the way I have to look at it. I feel like there's a few times I've been cheated here. Like you say, this place is great. It gave me many of my greatest moments in racing, but it's also given me many of my worst moments in racing. But that's what makes this place so special and so different."

RICH: "2006 you guys finish 2nd (Marco) and 3rd (Michael). That sounds like a great story, doesn't it? But how do you look at 2006, Marco?"

MARCO: "I got criticized for it. As a rookie I said, 'Second's nothing.' This is the only place where second is not great. Anywhere else is great points. You're on the podium and move on, good day. I wasn't saying it wasn't a good effort for a rookie. I was just so disappointed in what we missed out on."

RICH: "2003 Mario, you're 63 years old. You're out there running around in an IndyCar. Channel 13 helicopter video shows you doing your own helicopter, if I can call it that. Now I kind of look at that as pretty lucky, because that could have been awful." (Mario's car hit debris from another accident during a test at IMS and was launched into the air, flipping nose to tail several times before landing on four wheels. Mario was not injured.)

MARIO: "I hear this so called Andretti curse. I don't want to hear about it, because quite honestly when you look at the overall picture it's been positive. We've been lucky. Even that day for me, it could have been a pretty big headache obviously, but it wasn't."

MARCO: "I look at it like we're lucky. This place has given me some of my best results. It's just that we missed out on one thing that counts. Like I said, hopefully I can leave my career saying this place was very good to me."

RICH: "If you could somehow wind up in victory lane this year, what would that mean?"

MARIO: "A lot of partying."

MICHAEL: "Might be the first time you've ever seen a tear out of me. It would be that sort of emotion, because of everything that's gone on. If you were to bring it in victory lane, there would just not be anything more special that could happen to us in our careers I don't think."

RICH: "Do you think at the 200th Indy 500, there will be an Andretti in the race?"

MARIO: "Talk to these guys."

MICHAEL: "We'll work on it."

<http://www.wthr.com/story/32046463/50-plus-years-at-indy-a-conversation-with-three-generations-of-andretti-indycar-drivers>