

Mario Andretti named Grand Marshal of Sunday's IndyCar race

www.gplb.com

LONG BEACH, Calif. (March 11, 2014) – Mario Andretti, one of the most recognizable names in the history of motorsport, will serve as Grand Marshal for the 40th Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach on Sunday, April 13, saying the most famous words in auto racing – “Drivers, start your engines!” – just prior to the start of the featured IndyCar Series race.

Considered by many to be the greatest race driver in the history of the sport, Andretti's list of accomplishments on the track are numerous. He won the Indianapolis 500, the Daytona 500, the Formula One World Championship and the Pikes Peak Hillclimb. He won the IndyCar National Championship four times and was a three-time winner at Sebring. He won races in sports cars, sprint cars and stock cars - on ovals, road courses, drag strips, on dirt and on pavement. He was victorious at virtually every level of motorsports since he arrived in America from his native Italy at age 15.

“It is totally appropriate to have Mario as Grand Marshal for our 40th race,” said Jim Michaelian, president and CEO of the Grand Prix Association of Long Beach. “Over the years, he has been an important part of our history and heritage, and we're happy to honor his contributions to the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach in this way.”

“I raced for four decades on just about every course imaginable,” said Andretti. “And I have been associated with the Grand Prix of Long Beach since its beginning in 1975. So I think I speak with authority when I say that it is by far the most successful street race ever staged in American motor racing history. Obviously, the fondest memories I have of the streets of Long Beach are my victories, but the entertainment and ambiance away from the track has also become classic. No one leaves Long Beach without vowing to come back. It is truly amongst the best I've ever seen and I'm proud to be serving as Grand Marshal this year.”

Among Andretti's 111 race victories over five decades are four wins at Long Beach. Two of them -- in 1977 and 1984 -- were critical to the event becoming America's #1 Street Race. The 1977 race was Long Beach's second featuring F1 cars. At that time, American TV networks rarely televised F1 races. ESPN was yet to be born. Financial questions loomed large. And the bigger question was: would Southern California race fans support an F1 race?

Andretti sped to victory, becoming the first American to win an F1 race on U.S. soil. His win made the race and the City of Long Beach front-page news across the nation.

Seven years later, the Grand Prix switched from F1 cars to the Championship Auto Racing Teams (CART) series. And the question again was: Would Indy cars play in Long Beach?

Andretti again came to the rescue, winning in convincing fashion in front of more than 55,000 roaring fans, and the future of the race was even more secure.

Afterwards, addressing the media, Andretti said, "I love it here." Since 1977, race fans in Long Beach, Southern California and across the U.S. have felt the same way about him.

In addition to the IndyCar Series race, which will start at approximately 1:45 p.m. PT, the 40th Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach will feature the Tequila Patrón Sports Car Showcase with the cars of the TUDOR United SportsCar Championship, Pro/Celebrity Race, Indy Lights Presented by Cooper Tires, Pirelli World Challenge, Robby Gordon's SPEED Energy Formula Off-Road Series and Motegi Racing Super Drift Challenge.

Fans can select and pay for their 2014 Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach seats, parking and paddock passes online at gplb.com. Ticket orders can also be placed by calling the toll-free ticket hotline, (888) 82-SPEED. Also featured on gplb.com is the latest Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach news, downloadable ticket brochure and racetrack information, photos and ongoing announcements of special race week activities.

Ticket prices range from \$28 for a Friday General Admission ticket to \$135 for a three-day ticket that includes Sat./Sun. reserved seating in grandstand upper levels. Pre-paid parking packages are also available, along with handicapped seating, IndyCar Paddock passes, Super Photo tickets and a wide variety of Hospitality Club packages.

Fans can also follow the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach on Facebook at [GrandPrixLB](https://www.facebook.com/GrandPrixLB), Twitter @ToyotaGPLB (#TGPLB40) and Instagram at [ToyotaGPLB](https://www.instagram.com/ToyotaGPLB).

<http://www.gplb.com/news/2014-03-11/mario-andretti-named-grand-marshal-for-sunday-s-indycar-race/>