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Will Power Proves His Oval Power with First Indy 500 Victory



Mandatory Credit: Brian Spurlock-USA TODAY Sports



By [Heather Rule](#) - May 28, 2018

Will Power stopped his race car in victory lane and put both hands on his helmeted-head in a sign of disbelief and excitement. Once he tossed the steering wheel aside and removed his helmet, the

emphatic gestures continued until he finally pulled himself from the car and celebrated with so much pure joy that he looked possessed by a demon.

The reaction seemed appropriate for a driver who just won his first Indianapolis 500. To put his intense moment into content, the Toowoomba, Australia native Power is a guy who has previously and casually used the word “stoked” to describe other IndyCar Series victories.



Matt Archuleta

@indy44

I can't get over this. Pure Gold @12WillPower
#Indy500 #IndyCar



59 2:43 PM - May 27, 2018

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On his 11th try, the 37-year-old Power drove his Chevy-powered, No. 12 Penske car to the checkered flag in the 102nd running of the Indianapolis 500 Sunday after gaining the lead with just a few laps to go after leaders Stefan Wilson and Jack Harvey ducked into the pits with about four laps to go needing to get a splash of fuel. All Power had to do was keep it on the track as he had a clear gap between him and second place, polesitter Ed Carpenter.

“On the white-flag lap, I started screaming because I just knew I was going to win it,” said Power, during a post-race news conference from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway media center. “I’ve never been so excited.”

The victory was also No. 201 for team owner Roger Penske and No. 17 in the Indy 500. Power also swept the month of May, having won the Grand Prix of Indianapolis on the road course at the Indy. He had previously finished in the top 10 four times at Indy, with his best effort finishing runner-up to his then-teammate Juan Pablo Montoya in 2015.

A few things really made this Indy 500 victory special for Power. Before Sunday, he was considered by many to be the most successful, best active driver to never reach victory lane for the big race.

Post-Race Interview | Will Power Wins the 2018 Indianapolis 500



Maybe part of that was because he's never been known as a very successful driver on oval tracks. Only seven of his 34 career victories have come on ovals, including this year's Indy 500.

Flashback to the end of the 2012 IndyCar season at the Fontana oval when Power battled on track and in the standings with Ryan Hunter-Reay for the series championship. On lap 56 of 250, Power lost it going into a turn, spun and collided with the outside wall. Power was absolutely dejected during an on-camera interview in the infield following the crash.

"That's depressing... to lose a championship that way again," Power said to NBCSN.

Power fell short of a championship by just three points to winner Hunter-Reay. It was the third year in a row that Power suffered such heartbreak, with other shortcomings occurring on ovals. He had plenty of success on road and street courses but kept falling short on ovals. Would he win a championship? Would he ever win the Indy 500?

His 34 victories in 193 career races rank him in the top 10 in IndyCar history, plus he has 51 pole awards.

"I won so many races and poles and led more laps than anyone," Power said. "I just hadn't done it here.

"So, I've been thinking: 'Am I going to finish my career without a 500 win?'"

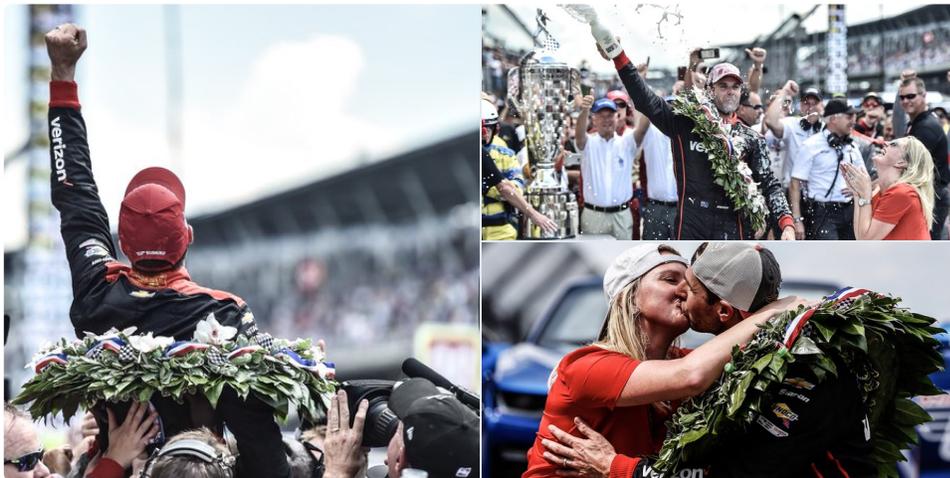
In 2014, he finally checked off the championship from his list with a pair of road/street course victories and a win at the Milwaukee Mile oval track. It was a highlight of his open-wheel career that started in ChampCar back in 2007 before open-wheel merged back together as the IndyCar Series.



Will Power

@12WillPower

What a dream come true. Not only winning The 102nd running of the #Indy500, but sweeping the month of May. The @Team_Penske and @verizon crew made this all happen. #ThisIsMay #IndyCar



3,472 3:58 PM - May 27, 2018

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Power, who joined Team Penske in 2009, won his first 11 races on road/street courses before his first oval win in 2011 at Texas Motor Speedway. He won five road/street course races in both 2010 and 2011. He's also won at Indy before – three times on the road course in 2015, 2017 and 2018. He was dubbed a road/street course driver with his success and the struggles he faced on ovals.

Take a look at recent numbers though, and it looks like he's reversing that trend and commanding respect as an all-around driver, culminating with his Indy 500 victory. Four of his past six victories have come on ovals. That's four after his IndyCar championship in 2014 when he had just three oval wins to his name in his career.

Power said after the race he's embraced ovals over the past few years. It all comes with experience, so he enjoyed the ovals now, and he's good at them, he said.

"I feel like every time I go to an oval, I absolutely have a chance to win, and that definitely wasn't the feeling at the beginning of my career," Power said. "I never thought I could win. But now, I know every oval I go to, it's just like a road course, I have a great shot at winning."

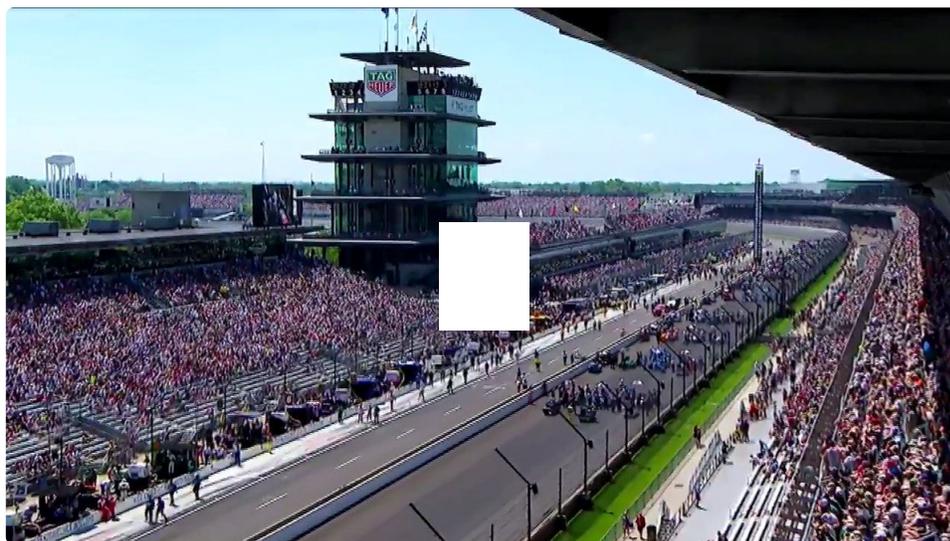


NTT IndyCar Series

@IndyCar

The 102nd Running of the #Indy500 ✓

RESULTS ➔ bit.ly/2L1E1Vk#INDYCAR // #Indy500



176 7:18 PM - May 27, 2018

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Other race tidbits:

- Danica Patrick's racing career did not end the way she envisioned. She fell back a few places from her starting position in seventh and spun into the wall of turn two on lap 69. The crash left her in 30th place. She finished 35th at the Daytona 500 this year after crashing out. The 36-year-old completed this shortened "Danica Double" to finish off her 14-year career in auto racing. She finishes with one career victory, coming in Japan in the ChampCar Series, and as the 2005 Indy 500 rookie of the year after leading 19 laps at the speedway.
- Helio Castroneves failed for the ninth time to become the fourth driver to win the race four times. The three-time winner was back with Team Penske as a part-time ride. He lost control of his car and hit the inside wall to end the day in 27th position. As he walked back to Gasoline Alley along pit road, he pleaded to team owner Roger Penske during a live-TV interview to bring him back next year. There are no guarantees, but Penske would probably like to give it another go next year.
- Polesitter and Indianapolis native Carpenter led early on in the race but fell short of his goal once again after starting first for the third time in his career. A trio of former Indy 500 winners rounded out the top five: Scott

Dixon (2008 winner), Alexander Rossi (who started next-to-last) (2016) and Hunter-Reay (2014). Some of the most exciting racing of the day came from the passes Rossi made through the field, especially after restarts.

- Nine cars were out of the race. The main culprit for the cautions in the race was not a multi-car crash but instead drivers losing control of their cars and hitting the wall with the combination of hot air/track temperatures and not enough downforce. James Davison had trouble keeping up the pace with the field, and last year's winner Takuma Sato ran into the back of his car for the first caution. Sebastien Bourdais, Sage Karam and 2013 winner Tony Kanaan also all made contact with the wall in separate incidents. Kyle Kaiser was the only car that didn't finish because of mechanical issues with his car.
- Ed Jones was another driver who hit the wall during the race. He was taken to the hospital with head and neck pain and will reportedly be evaluated before next weekend's doubleheader in Detroit.
- Marco Andretti finished in 12th place in his 13th Indy 500. He's never finished higher than his near-miss, runner-up finish in 2006 in one of the closest finishes in history.
- Robert Wickens was the highest-finishing rookie in ninth place.

Post 2018 Indy 500 Press Conference with Will Power



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