



American Auto Racing Writers & Broadcasters Association

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2010 AUTO RACING ALL-AMERICA TEAM SELECTED

BURBANK, Calif. – The 2010 All-America Auto Racing Team has been chosen by members of the nation's motorsports press. The team includes the largest group ever named to the First Team, 21 drivers, as a result of the addition of a new category this year by the American Auto Racing Writers and Broadcasters Association.

In addition, AARWBA created a new Rising Star Award to recognize a fresh new name making his mark on the sport.

Drivers from the Open Wheel, Stock Car, Road Racing and Drag Racing categories are in contention for the Jerry Titus Award -- the team's Driver of the Year, each of them dominating the vote in their category. Just nine votes cover the group, which includes two former multiple Titus winners. The Titus winner is not revealed until the All-America ceremonies in Indianapolis, Ind., on Jan. 9.

Four former Titus winners are on the team this year -- Indy Car champions Dario Franchitti (2007, 2009) and Tony Kanaan (2004), and NHRA champions John Force (1996, 1999, 2000, 2002) and Tony Schumacher (2006, 2008). Schumacher is a Second Team selection this year and Kanaan earned Honorable Mention.

Chosen as the Rising Star of 2010 was IRL Firestone Indy Lights champion J.K. Vernay, 23, from France, who picked up votes from nearly a third of the voters on the 15-name ballot. Vernay ended up four votes ahead of NASCAR Camping World Truck Series rookie of the year Austin Dillon, 20. Third in the vote was USAC driver Kody Swanson, 22, who raced in five different USAC series with victories in four of them.

Following in the Rising Star vote were Indy Light's James Hinchcliffe, 23; Grand-Am's Ricky Taylor, 21; Scott Tucker, 47, from American Le Mans, and a surprise write-in, LE Tonglet, 20, NHRA's Pro Stock Bike champion and rookie of the year. The poll does not include motorcycle racers because it is, after all, an *auto* racing team, but young Tonglet's stellar season was enough to inspire a number of voters to write in his name.

The Titus, given in remembrance of the late racer/journalist, signifies the top vote-getter on the All-America team regardless of category, is announced at the conclusion of the annual AARWBA banquet, which is open to the public. Two drivers from each of eight categories is elected to the First Team, two more to the Second Team, and all drivers receiving at least five percent of the vote (minimum five votes) earn honorable mention.

Force won his unprecedented 15th NHRA Full Throttle Funny Car championship this year, a triumphant return from a near-fatal accident in 2007. With his 6-win season he won his 16th selection as an All-America in the Drag Racing category, all but one of them First Team. Force's 15 First Team selections stands behind only World of Outlaws legend Steve Kinser, chosen 18 times. His 16 times as an All-America (chosen once as Second Team in 1991), trails Kinser's 23 and Mario Andretti's 18.

Joining Force is Top Fuel champion Larry Dixon, whose 12-win season ended Tony Schumacher's run of five championships. It is Dixon's fifth All-America selection, his third on the First Team.

Franchitti won his second Indianapolis 500 and his third Indy Car championship in 2010, continuing as the most dominant driver in American open wheel racing three of the past four years and leading the Open Wheel category. The Scot has been a First Team All-America each of those years, six times total.

Will Power, the young Aussie who led the Indy Car championship most of the season, joins Franchitti on the First Team after a five-win season. It is Power's first All-America nod.

Jimmie Johnson is no surprise as a Titus contender after his landmark fifth straight NASCAR Sprint Cup championship. His six-win season plus a come-from-behind points chase in the year's final race got him his sixth selection on the First Team, his ninth time overall.

A surprise, however, was the selection of Kyle Busch to join Johnson in the Stock Car category. The winner of 24 races in NASCAR's top three series (three Sprint Cup, 13 Nationwide, eight Camping World Trucks and that series' owner's championship), Busch outpointed Denny Hamlin by just one vote for his fourth All-America selection, his first on the First Team.

The pairing of Scott Pruett and Memo Rojas led the Road Racing category for the second time in three years. The Pruett/Rojas duo is the Daytona Prototype champions in the Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series with a series-record nine victories in 12 races. It is Pruett's 11th time on the First Team, third on that list behind Force, and his 13th time overall. His Mexican teammate is an All-America for the second time. In endurance racing where teammates share a car for the full season, they are voted on as one.

The second First Team pair in Road Racing are the American Le Mans Series Prototype champions David Brabham and Simon Pagenaud. The Australian/French pairing won four races including the Petit LeMans at Road Atlanta and were on the podium in all nine of the series' races. It is Brabham's fifth All-American selection, his second on First Team, while Pagenaud is First Team for the First time after an Honorable Mention in 2009.

Todd Bodine, winning his second NASCAR Camping World Truck Series championship, easily outdistanced everyone in the Touring Series vote. It is his second All-America selection, both First Team, matching his 2006 championship.

Behind Bodine, however, it was a huge dogfight with all five of the other ballot contenders in a virtual dead heat. In the final tally only five votes separated the quintet, but atop the heap was NASCAR Whelen Modified Series champion and four-time race winner Bobby Santos. It is the first time a driver from the Modified ranks has achieved First Team status, and is, of course, the first All-America for Santos.

The category illustrated well that one vote can make a difference: Only one vote behind was NASCAR K&N East Series champ Ryan Truex, and two more votes back was ARCA champion Patrick Sheltra to make up the Second Team; one more vote down was USAR Pro Series champ Clay Rogers, and K&N West champ Eric Holmes was just another single vote down, earning Honorable Mention.

There was also an unexpected result in the Short Track category, where two U.S. Auto Club combatants won in a category long dominated by World of Outlaws champions. Brian Clauson outpointed Levi Jones by just one vote to form the First Team pairing. Clauson won USAC's National Driver Championship and Mopar National Midget Championship over Jones by winning the season finale Turkey Night Grand Prix at Irwindale, Calif. Jones, for his part, won both the K&N Silver Crown and the Amsoil National Sprint Car Championships. It is the first time on First Team for both drivers. Jones has been chosen Second Team or Honorable Mention three times previously.

The new Off Road & Rally category produced the only tie in the voting, resulting in a four-member First Team. Vote leader Rob MacCachren is the one familiar face, earning his fifth All-America nod, his third on the First Team -- in previous years chosen in the At Large category. MacCachren won in four different off-road series and leads the Pro 2 Unlimited class in the Lucas Off-Road Racing Series where he has won eight times. He has also won in TORC, SCORE and SNORE races.

Tied in the vote were Ricky Johnson, champion of the Traxxas TORC Series Pro 2wd class, and Antoine L'Estage/Nathalie Richard champions of the RallyCar Rally America series. All are all-America for the first time. Johnson has six wins in the TORC series and two more in the LOORS series. Canadians L'Estage/Richard won two of the six Rally America events and are also leading the Canadian Rally Championship with three victories.

The At Large category went to an endurance racing tandem and a drag racer, All-America veterans all. Topping the vote were the American Le Mans Series' GT class champions, Jörg Bergmeister and Patrick Long, with four victories together in the nine races. Long also branched out to NASCAR and won a K&N West series race in Portland. It's Bergmeister's fourth All-America selection and Long's second, all First Team.

Frank Manzo, the NHRA Top Alcohol Funny Car champ, is nearly the Funny Car clone of John Force but with alky fuels. With a 12-win season it is Manzo's 14 national championship and 20th divisional championship, and his eighth All-America, second time on First Team.

Information on the All-America Banquet is available at www.AARWBA.org. The banquet and ceremony is open to the public. --Rocky Entriken

FIRST TEAM

OPEN WHEEL: Dario Franchitti, Will Power
STOCK CAR: Jimmie Johnson, Kyle Busch
ROAD RACING: Scott Pruett/Memo Rojas, David Brabham/Simon Pagenaud
DRAG RACING: John Force, Larry Dixon
SHORT TRACK: Bryan Clauson, Levi Jones
TOURING SERIES: Todd Bodine, Bobby Santos
OFF-ROAD & RALLY: Rob MacCachren, Ricky Johnson & Antoine L'Estage/Nathalie Richard (tie)
AT LARGE: Jörg Bergmeister/Patrick Long, Frank Manzo

SECOND TEAM

OPEN WHEEL: Helio Castroneves, Ryan Briscoe
STOCK CAR: Denny Hamlin, Brad Keselowski
ROAD RACING: Tony Ave, Jon Fogarty/Alex Gurney
DRAG RACING: Tony Schumacher, Matt Hagan
SHORT TRACK: Jason Myers, Tim Shaffer
TOURING SERIES: Ryan Truex, Patrick Sheltra
OFF-ROAD & RALLY: B.J. Baldwin
AT LARGE: J.K. Vernay, Peter Cunningham

HONORABLE MENTION

(At least 5% of the vote, five votes minimum)

OPEN WHEEL: Tony Kanaan
STOCK CAR: Kevin Harvick, Jamie McMurray
ROAD RACING: Max Angelelli/Ricky Taylor
DRAG RACING: none
SHORT TRACK: none
TOURING SERIES: Clay Rogers, Eric Holmes
OFF-ROAD & RALLY: Jesse Jones, Tom Lawless
AT LARGE: Randy Pobst, Von Smith

RISING STAR

(All who received at least five votes)

J.K. Vernay (IRL Indy Lights)
Austin Dillon (NASCAR Trucks)
Kody Swanson (USAC)
James Hinchcliffe (IRL Indy Lights)
Ricky Taylor (Grand-Am Daytona Prototype)
LE Tonglet (NHRA Pro Stock Motorcycle) [write-in]
Scott Tucker (ALMS LMP Challenge)
Jonathan Bomarito (Grand-Am GT)
Robert Stout (SCCA World Challenge)

Tanner Swanson (USAC)

Lucas Wolfe (WoO Sprint Cars))