

Dario Franchitti is the Titus Winner!

Dario Franchitti, the IZOD IndyCar Series Champion, was honored again on Jan. 9, by winning the American Auto Racing Writers and Broadcasters Association's Jerry Titus Award for the third time in four years. Franchitti joins other three time Titus winners, Mario Andretti, ('77,'78, and '84); and Jeff Gordon, ('95, '98,'01). John Force, ('96,'99, '00, '02) is the only Four Time Titus Winner. It might have been a tie, with Force just four votes short.

AARWBA President Dusty Brandel announced Franchitti as the organization's Driver of the Year as AARWBA honored its 41st All-America Team at the headquarters of Target Chip Ganassi Racing in Indianapolis.

"Winning this award is like a full stop for the year, and a chance to look back on the year one last time," Franchitti said. "It's great to know the people at AARWBA appreciate what the team and I did last year. It's something I'm very, very proud of."

The Jerry Titus Trophy is awarded to the driver who receives the most All-America Team votes. It is named in memory of the late journalist and racer, who was a member of AARWBA, the country's oldest and largest organization of motorsports media professionals. It is the highest honor AARWBA offers.

Brandel also presented veteran broadcaster Ken Squier the Pioneer in Racing Award for his longtime dedication and achievement that has made a difference in the industry, including the 1979 Daytona 500. Firestone Indy Lights champion J.K. Vernay won the first Rising Star Award.

"It is quite an honor to be recognized with all these other drivers," said Vernay, who was a second-team selection to the All-America Team. "I have to thank Sam Schmidt Motorsports and my management team for bringing me to America. I want to race in IndyCar and race against some of the talented drivers here very soon."

Franchitti and IZOD IndyCar Series runner-up Will Power were the open-wheel honorees. They shared First Team status with other Horsepower Trophy recipients Scott Pruett/Memo Rojas and David Brabham/Simon Pagenaud (road racing), Bryan Clauson and Levis Jones (short track). Patrick Long/Jorg Bergmeister and Frank Manzo (at-large), John Force and Larry Dixon (drag racing), Todd Bodine and

Bobby Santos (touring series), Rob MacCachren, Ricky Johnson & Antoine L'Estage/Nathalie Richard (rally/off-road) and Jimmie Johnson and Kyle Busch (stock car).

Pruett presented the Gorsline Scholarship to 19-year-old Conor Daly, who claimed the Star Mazda Championship title in record-setting fashion. John Gorsline of the Gorsline Company recognizes a young up-and-coming driver each year that displays the attributes of a future champion and helps aspiring drivers to develop both on and off the track to attain their professional goals.