



Richard Petty Receives IMRRC's 2015 Cameron Argetsinger Award

WATKINS GLEN, N.Y. (Aug. 7, 2015) - In an evening filled with tributes and taunts, Richard Petty was honored on Thursday, Aug. 6, with the Cameron R. Argetsinger Award for his contributions to racing.

The dinner was held at the famed Corning (N.Y.) Museum of Glass in advance of the Cheez- It 355 at The Glen NASCAR race this weekend at Watkins Glen International in upstate New York. The dinner was presented by NASCAR, International Speedway Corp. and WGI.

The International Motor Racing Research Center honored "The King," the winningest driver in racing and a noted philanthropist, with the award in front of a capacity crowd of race-car drivers, sponsors and industry and local dignitaries.

Introduced as "the world's best ambassador for NASCAR," Petty said he has committed himself through his entire career to acknowledging and appreciating the people who have made his achievements possible, listing fans, team members, sponsors and the people who buy sponsors' products.

"I feel like I've been really lucky," he said. "How many millions of people did it take to get me up here? You can't say thank you enough."

The award dinner was a fund-raiser for the IMRRC, an archival and research library dedicated to preserving and sharing the history of motorsports.

"It's an amazing facility, filled with one-of-a-kind things," Master of Ceremonies Dr. Jerry Punch told the crowd. "You owe it to yourself to visit. You'll be absolutely amazed at what it holds."

In tribute to Petty, Punch interviewed current Richard Petty Motorsports drivers Aric Almirola and Sam Hornish Jr., as well as Petty's legendary crew chief Dale Inman, in a chatty session among the three.

Almirola recalled a lesson in how to pass, given on a napkin with a Sharpie. Petty, he said, doesn't buy into all the talk of aerodynamics and "dirty air."

"So I listen, and I've tried really, really hard not to let the car in front of me hold me up. And, he's always right," Almirola said, adding, "You have to listen to 'The King.' He pays the bills."

Hornish said he was grateful for guidance and encouragement from Petty, calling him a positive role model.

Petty's long-time crew chief Inman said Petty was simply great with a car throughout his career, but he wanted the audience to know that Petty's greatness continues with his generous community work.

Ten years ago, the Pettys established Victory Junction, a summer camp for children with medical conditions or serious illnesses. In his remarks, Petty told the dinner audience that 22,000 children have attended the camp since its beginnings.

"The good Lord put us here for a reason. We just went through the racing part to get to the part He wanted us to do," Petty said.

Multi-team owner Chip Ganassi, last year's inaugural recipient of the Cameron R. Argetsinger Award for Outstanding Contributions to Motorsports, congratulated Petty on being this year's honoree, saying, "Hell, he is everyone's racing hero. He and his Petty-blue 43 are both sports icons. They go together every bit as much as Mickey Mantle and pinstripes or Mean Joe Green and the steel logo on his helmet."

Appropriately, IMRRC President J.C. Argetsinger explained that one of the Center's missions was to be the "Cooperstown, N.Y., of motor racing."

"We are absolutely thrilled to be honoring Richard Petty. The Pettys are the first-family of American racing," Argetsinger said, citing Lee Petty's race at Watkins Glen in 1957, followed by father and son, Lee and Richard, both racing at The Glen in 1964. In 1992, it was again father and son at The Glen: Richard and Kyle.

"It's part of the sport's history, and we're proud of our role of preserving that history," Argetsinger said.

The award memorializes Cameron R. Argetsinger, founder and organizer of the first races at Watkins Glen.

Petty's son, longtime race-car driver and T.V. racing analyst Kyle, as expected threw some barbs at his famous dad.

"I don't know why you're honoring him here. He's never won at Watkins Glen," said Kyle, who won that 1992 race.

Kyle, too, cited his father's philanthropic work and the positive impact he has had communities and individuals.

"He's a bigger champion away from the race track than he ever was on the race track," Kyle said. "You're not only getting the greatest driver that ever sat in a race car, you're getting the greatest human being that I have known in my life."

Video shout-outs from NASCAR drivers Tony Stewart, Jeff Gordon and Jimmie Johnson were shown, as well as a fitting tribute video to "The King" produced by NASCAR Productions especially for the evening.

WGI President Michael Printup presented a video of amusing television coverage out-takes from Petty's career, eliciting laughter and applause.

Other speakers included Indy 500 champion Bobby Rahal, chairman of the IMRRC Governing Council, and Smithfield Foods Vice President, Corporate Marketing, Bob Weber.

"Richard Petty is the single highest recognizable motorsports driver of all time and the most trusted driver," Weber said, representing one of Richard Petty Motorsports major sponsors. "It's a great connection for us."

The evening concluded with a spirited bidding war for an original painting by motorsports artist Randy Owens, depicting Petty's 200th win at Daytona International Speedway on July 4, 1984. It went for \$4,500.

Also auctioned off was a surprise gift donated by Petty: one of his iconic hats preserved in a display case. Punch and Petty skillfully manipulated the bidding to also include the hat Petty was wearing, fetching \$9,000 for the pair between two bidders.

A silent auction of Petty memorabilia and other high-quality donated items was also held.

The evening's proceeds benefits the IMRRC, an archival and research library dedicated to the preservation and sharing of the history of motorsports, of all series and all venues, through its collections of books, periodicals, films, photographs, fine art and other materials. The IMRRC is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

For more information about the Center's work and its programs, visit www.racingarchives.org or call 607-535-9044. The Center also is on Facebook at International Motor Racing Research Center.

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