

ABC to present 75th running of Indianapolis 500

Speeds set at trials already topping records

By Steve Paschal

If the speeds posted during the time trials are any indication of things to come, this year's Indianapolis 500 promises to be one of the fastest and most competitive in the race's 75-year history.

Records began falling on the first day of practice for the biggest single-day event in racing, which will be televised live on ABC Sunday, May 26, when three-time champion Ricky Mears shattered Emerson Fittipaldi's qualifying record with a sizzling four-lap average of 227 mph. In fact, five other drivers were clocked at speeds in excess of the 223.8 mph record, including defending champion Arie Luyendyk, 1989 winner Fittipaldi, Gary Bettenhausen, Mario Andretti and son Michael Andretti.

Those showings are a far cry from the inaugural race in 1911 when Ray Harroun piloted his Marmon Wasp the 200 laps around the fabled Brickyard with an average speed of 74.6 mph. It wasn't until 1930 that Billy Arnold crashed the 100 mph barrier, and it was another 35 years before Jim Clark exceeded 150 mph in his Lotus Ford. Last year Luyendyk smashed the old record set by Bobby Rahal in 1986 by over 15 mph with an average clocking of 185.9 mph.

The sentimental flavor created by the presence of such longtime veterans as Fittipaldi and Darrell Waltrip intensified earlier this month with living legend A.J. Foyt passed his mandatory physical exam and was cleared by doctors to drive in his 34th Indy, which he has indicated will be his last. The 56-year-old Foyt, sidelined since he suffered extensive injuries to his arms and legs in a crash last September, is racing's all-time winningest driver with 67 victories on the CART circuit. His four Memorial weekend victories tie him for first place with Al Unser atop the list of Indy champions.

Mears, a three-time winner who finished first in 1979, 1984 and 1988, will be looking to join that elite group of two after almost accomplishing that feat in 1989. That year a clutch problem sent him to the pits as he battled Fittipaldi and Al Unser Jr. for the lead. Fittipaldi, one of this year's favorites along with Mears, Unser and Luyendyk, survived a tire-bumping incident less than two laps from the finish line that sent the junior Unser into the wall and out of the race as Fittipaldi took the checkered flag.

More than 300,000 racing fans are expected to converge on Indianapolis to watch the field of 33 drivers burn rubber for more than \$4.5 million in prize money. Millions

more will be tuning in to ABC for live race coverage complete with commentary by three-time Indy winner Bobby Unser and racing experts Paul Page, Sam Posey and Jack Whitaker.

This will be the sixth consecutive year that ABC Sports, which has earned four Emmys for its Indy specials, has presented live coverage of auto racing's most prestigious event. From 1971 through 1985, ABC provided exclusive same-day network coverage, and prior to that the race was carried on a delayed basis on "ABC's Wide World of Sports." This year ABC will be in the pits, the hospital area and garage to bring up-to-the-minute reports in addition to the telecast of the race.

ABC Sports televises the 75th Indianapolis 500, the greatest auto race in the world, Monday. Defending champ Arie Luyendyk heads a field of 33 drivers.

WEDNESDAY



Sam (Scott Bakula, right) leaps into multi-personalities as a mental patient, astonishing a doctor (David Proval) on the season ender of NBC's *Quantum Leap*, Wednesday.