

## MARIO ANDRETTI'S CHAMPIONSHIP INDY CAR MAKES INTERNATIONAL CONCOURS DEBUT AT AMELIA ISLAND CONCOURS d'ELEGANCE 2016



Photos courtesy of Ray Evernham

Legendary NASCAR Crew Chief Ray Evernham has chosen the 21st annual Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance to debut this restoration of the car that took Mario Andretti to the 1965 USAC National Championship and Indianapolis 500 Rookie of the Year award.

After a painstakingly accurate restoration led by famed Indy 500 Crew Chief Jim McGee, Mario Andretti's Brawner Hawk Ford will appear at the 2016 Amelia Island Concours exactly as it did in May 1965 when Andretti won Indy's Rookie-of-the-Year honors with a third place finish in the 49th running of the Memorial Day classic.

McGee was employed by legendary Indy Car builder Clint Brawner when the pair created Brawner's first rear-engine "funny car" for the 1965 Indy 500. Brawner had been an orthodox "Indy roadster" man, but saw the future when Indy's rear-engine revolution began.

It was a warning shot so loud that it echoed for four years. In 1961 Jack Brabham, the reigning Formula 1 World Champion, took a tiny, rear-engine Cooper Formula 1 racer, powered by what was essentially a portable fire pump engine, to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

The little British engine gave away 1.5 liters displacement and over 150 horsepower to Indy's mighty Offenhausers. Brabham, the 1959 and 1960 Formula 1 World Champion, was an Indy rookie in '61 and the only foreign driver in the field. His little green car defied and ignored every Indy 500 convention and

superstition. The Indy establishment didn't take it seriously. That was a mistake. It was the 50th anniversary of the first Indianapolis 500 and tradition was the theme for Indy's entire "Month of May". But the British car with its engine at the wrong end changed the world on that Tuesday afternoon in late May, 1961. When the 45th Indy 500 ended, the little green "funny car" (as Indy veterans took to calling rear-engine racers) was ninth and, tellingly, on the lead lap.



The Indy establishment fought back and stuck with the old front-engine cars. Veteran Indy Car builder Clint Brawner wasn't one of them. After watching Jim Clark's rear-engine Lotus Ford nearly win the 1963 Indy 500 and then sit on Indy's pole in 1964, Brawner knew the days of the roadster were over.

That winter Brawner and Jim McGee "borrowed" a crashed Brabham BT12 "funny car" and, with Jack Brabham's blessing, copied it. They made a few strategic changes and structural improvements, mounted a Ford DOHC V-8 behind the driver, named it the "Hawk" and turned "new kid" Mario Andretti loose on the 1965 championship season and the Indianapolis 500 where Andretti finished third and won Rookie of the Year honors.

Two months after the "500" the USAC Championship Trail was back in Indy for the championship road race at Indianapolis Raceway Park where Andretti and Brawner's Hawk scored their first victory. By the end of the '65 season, Andretti and his Brawner Hawk were National Champions. In 1966 Andretti and a Brawner Hawk took the championship title again winning an impressive 66 per cent of the season's races on road courses and paved ovals!

"From the historian's point of view, Ray Evernham's '65 Brawner Hawk is a pivotally important car," said Bill Warner, founder and Chairman of the Amelia

Island Concours d'Elegance. "It crystalizes a moment of monumental change in American race car design and construction: a true 'technological changing of the guard' -- the first American-built rear engine car to win the national championship."

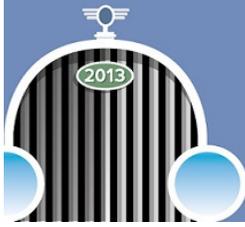
This car launched the Andretti legend: Mario not only won the Indy 500 in the Brawner Hawk, he ultimately won the Daytona 500 and the Formula 1 World Championship. It all started in 1965 in the cockpit of Clint Brawner's first rear-engine car that will make its concours debut on March 13, 2016 at the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance.



**The 21st Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance tickets are going fast. Don't miss out. Visit [www.ameliaconcours.org](http://www.ameliaconcours.org) to purchase tickets to the various events occurring at and around The 21st Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance.**

### **About The Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance**

Now in its third decade, the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance is among the top automotive events in the world. Always held the second full weekend in March, "The Amelia" draws over 250 rare vehicles from collections around the world to The Golf Club of Amelia Island and The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island for a celebration of the automobile like no other. Since 1996, the show's Foundation has donated over \$2.75 million to Community Hospice of Northeast Florida, Inc., Spina Bifida of Jacksonville, The Navy Marine Corps Relief Society, Shop with Cops, and other deserving charities. The 21st annual Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance is scheduled for March 11-13, 2016. For more information, visit [www.ameliaconcours.org](http://www.ameliaconcours.org).



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