

# **"PEAKING" IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR**

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## **Corvette's Pace Cars: A Love Affair with the Indy 500**

### **Part 2**

In this three-part series we look at Corvette's long history of providing Indianapolis 500s pace cars and their official replicas (those produced by GM for sale to the public) over the decades. The Corvette has paced the annual Memorial Day Indianapolis 500 race more often – 19 times – than any other car. (Sources for these articles are provided at end of Part 3.)



2005

In 2005, a Victory Red Corvette served as the official pace car for the 47th Daytona 500. Given the motto "An American Heritage," this pace car was designed to honor the heritage of the historic Corvette race cars of yesteryear. from the hood to the trunk lid. It was powered by a 6.0L LS2 engine with 400 horsepower. Driven by Retired Army General and former Secretary of State Colin Powell, there were only three pace cars of this model produced, all in Victory Red.



2006 (Z06)

Corvette set the pace again in 2006. In a patriotic touch, the body of this pace car featured a white body with red and blue stripes, in addition to white stars on the rear fenders. In a decision that would likely be regretted later, 7-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong was its driver (all wins later voided due to his doping). A new 505 hp engine provided the power, capable of 198 mph and 0-60 in 3.7 seconds.



2007

The streak of Corvette pace cars continued in 2007 with this attractive Atomic Orange version with its distinctive gold ribbon graphics. Actor and race car driver Patrick Dempsey was in the driver's seat. Chevrolet produced 500 replicas, all powered by a 6.0L LS2 small-block engine power rated at 400 HP and a 6-speed transmission; it was capable of 0-60 MPH in 4.1-seconds with a top speed of 186 MPH.



## 2008 Z51

For 2008, Chevrolet went with a black-and-silver retro theme to commemorate the first, 1978 edition. It provided 436 hp with either a six-speed manual or six-speed paddle-shift automatic. Its 500 replicas were also marketed as a 30th anniversary edition—again, a callback to the '78 Limited Edition. And like the 1978 version, the 2008 was offered as a coupe as well as a convertible, each with black-and-silver paint schemes. The Z51 handling package was standard as was a Z06 rear spoiler. Two-time Indy 500 winner Emerson Fittipaldi drove the car on the opening lap; he personally signed each replica at the Bowling Green, Ky. assembly plant.



## And in 2008: Concept E Car

To emphasize its concern with the environment, in 2008 Chevrolet also brought a special concept Corvette Z06 "E85" pace car to the Indy 500 - not sold to the public and remaining a concept car. It was an interesting shade of green and ran on E85 ethanol in an effort to be a bit eco-friendlier (or at least as low in emissions as a 7.0-liter engine can be). Fittipaldi drove this car as well.



## 2012 ZR1

After a three-year absence from leading the Indy 500, a Corvette ZR1 led the race in 2012. Driving was Guy Fieri, best-selling author and host of the Food Network's hit show "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives." With 638 horsepower, the Corvette ZR1 was the most powerful production car ever to pace the Indy 500.



## 2013

The all-new C7 2014 Corvette Stingray paced the 2013 Indy 500, starting the 97th running of "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing." It marked a record 12th time Corvette had served in this role. Jim Harbaugh, head coach of the NFL's San Francisco 49ers, was at the wheel; this car featured a 450 hp, 6.2L engine and several advanced engine technologies.



### 2015 Z06

After skipping a year, Corvette returned to the Indy 500 in 2015, with NASCAR legend Jeff Gordon driving the first lap. Gordon, who grew up near Indianapolis, won the first NASCAR race in the history of the famed 2.5-mile oval and later won four more times. This model featured 650 supercharged hp, a seven-speed manual transmission, and a track-capable chassis system in the production-spec Corvette Z06. It came in Arctic White with Adrenaline Red interior.



### 2017 Grand Sport

The 2017 Corvette Grand Sport paced the 101st Indy 500, marking the 14th time a Corvette had served - and the 28th time a Chevrolet had led the field, dating back to 1948 when a Fleetmaster Six convertible paced the race. This pacer was equipped with a 460-hp LT1 V8 engine, carbon-fiber body elements, 19-inch front and 20-inch rear wheels, carbon ceramic brakes, a Z07 package, and acceleration from 0 to 60 mph in 3.6 seconds.