

Mears defeats Luyendyk in Marlboro 500 shootout

By Mike Harris
The Associated Press

BROOKLYN, Mich. — When it came to the shootout, Rick Mears simply had more firepower than Arie Luyendyk in Sunday's Marlboro 500.

It was a two-car fight over the final 16 laps and neither driver backed down.

Mears and Luyendyk drove the fastest laps of the day — both just under 225 mph — but it was Mears who drew steadily away and won his eighth 500-mile race and first at Michigan International Speedway.

"I had a good lead on him, but I didn't want Arie to get up in my draft and get close enough to push me," Mears said. "In that situation, you try not to change your rhythm, just keep doing the things that got you there."

Luyendyk, who tried to overcome a stop-and-go penalty assessed late in the race, said, "We gave it everything we had, but Rick's car was just a rocket. We were going pretty fast out there, too."

Mears, who won his fourth Indianapolis 500 in May, said, "There were a lot of people with problems out there today and we were pretty fortunate. It's been a long time getting this one under our belt."

The 21 starters made up the smallest field ever for a 500-mile event and only seven were running at the end, tying the Michigan record set in 1986.

After trading the lead with Mears several times, starting on Lap 167, Luyendyk made a costly mistake, passing the lapped car of John Andretti between Turns 3 and 4 moments before the green flag was waved for Lap 188. CART, the series sanctioning body, handed down a stop-and-go penalty, which Luyendyk took on Lap 192.



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Marlboro 500 winner Rick Mears displays his trophy after edging Arie Luyendyk by 3.14 seconds Sunday at Michigan International Speedway.

That sent him to the rear of the lead lap, just ahead of Mears, and appeared to end his chances of a victory. But he hoped for another opportunity.

It came on Lap 231 when the ninth and final caution flag came out after Eddie Cheever's car caught fire and stopped in the infield grass. That put Luyendyk only yards behind Mears' Chevrolet-powered Penske racer for the restart on Lap 235.

But Mears, who had set a qualifying record of 225.169 mph, pulled steadily away from Luyen-

dyk's Lola-Chevrolet and won by 3.14 seconds.

It was still a fortunate finish for Luyendyk, who could not practice or qualify Thursday and Friday because car owner Vince Granatelli was embroiled in a legal battle with a sponsor and was under a restraining order. The order was dissolved after a hearing late Friday and Luyendyk wound up qualifying 20th in the 21-car field.

Al Unser Jr. finished third, four laps down, after Mario Andretti's engine quit five laps from the end, relegating him to fourth.

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