

# Mark Donohue – the fastest man in the 917

**No driver mastered the 1,200 hp Porsche 917/30 more convincingly than Mark Donohue. The Indianapolis winner of 1972 won the Canadian-American Challenge Cup series in 1973 with the strongest racing car of all time.**

Mark Donohue did not conform to the ideal image of an American racing driver. On the contrary – Donohue was quiet, reserved and thoughtful, sometimes earning himself the nickname ‘Captain Nice’. By no means did the qualified mechanical engineer limit himself to racing. Instead, he took care of every aspect of racing car technology, often reaching for the spanner and discussing technical changes with designers for hours on end.

Donohue competed in his first race in 1957 before becoming the number-one driver for Roger Penske after 1966 and winning several championships in the USA. In 1971, he made his Formula One debut in a McLaren at the Canadian Grand Prix and finished third. In 1972, Donohue won the Indianapolis 500 in a Penske car. Working together with Roger Penske’s team and the Porsche works team, Donohue prepared for his first Can-Am series in 1972. When Porsche engineers asked about the performance of the turbo engine, which delivered output of more than 1,000 hp, Donohue said, ‘As long as the wheels don’t spin in top gear, I’d like even more power.’ At the first Can-Am race in 1972 in Mosport, he took the lead and, after a brief stop for repairs in the pits, he finished second behind series winner Denny Hulme in a McLaren Chevrolet. Donohue then injured himself in an accident and had to watch George Follmer win the championship in ‘his’ Porsche. In the 1973 Can-Am season, Donohue won six of eight Can-Am races in the new 917/30. In August 1975, driving a revised 917/30 on Talladega’s oval course, he set a world record for closed race tracks with an average speed of 355.848 km/h.

After the 1973 season, Donohue announced his retirement as a racing driver and began managing Penske’s team. However, when Roger Penske decided to enter Formula One, a role as driver once again appealed to Donohue. During training for the Austrian Grand Prix, the American came off the track in his Penske March and went head-first through an advertising banner. The injuries he sustained from this accident did not seem serious at first, but he suffered a stroke the next day and died.