



## **Panther and Wheldon Slated to Start 18<sup>th</sup> in Surfers Paradise** *Wet Conditions Hamper Team's Qualification Efforts During Saturday Qualifications*

SURFERS PARADISE, Australia – (October 25, 2008) – Just when Panther Racing and driver Dan Wheldon had their car's setup in a good spot, a rain storm during Saturday qualifications for the Nikon Indy 300 threw a wrench in the team's plans. Wheldon was eliminated in the first of the session's three rounds of qualifications, and will start 18<sup>th</sup> in tomorrow's race in Surfers Paradise, Australia.

Wheldon posted a quick lap of 88.328 mph, 1:53.9106 seconds, which puts the Englishman on the outside of the ninth row. Because of the league's way of placing eliminated drivers on the final grid, Wheldon has three competitors ahead of him with slower qualification times.

A rain shower poured upon the track just prior to the start of the first qualification group, and then inconsistent rain during the bulk of the first two knockout sessions made strategy calls difficult for all teams and drivers. By the time the Firestone Fast Six was underway, a majority of the track had dried and all competitors were on slick (dry) tires. Tomorrow afternoon's 60-lap race will be an exhibition non-points race, as the final standings in the 2008 season have been finalized. For teams like Panther, the race provides a tremendous opportunity to work with a new driver for the first time under race weekend conditions. The team has already tested with Wheldon at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and Sebring International Raceway.

The Nikon Indy 300 will be broadcast live Saturday, October 25<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 p.m. (ET) on ESPN Classic with additional coverage provided by the IMS Radio Network and XM Satellite Radio Channels 144 and 145.

### ***Wheldon's Helmet Showcases Australia Flavor***

For Wheldon, unique helmet paint schemes are nothing new, but his special paint job for Australia is likely one of the former champion's most unique and specialized. Featuring an all-Australia theme, the helmet features kangaroos, a boomerang, a surfer riding a wave along the side and random scenes of the outback. Painted by JLF Designs, Wheldon



will wear the helmet for the weekend and retire it to a special place in his collection. JLF Designs claims Wheldon and Formula One superstar, and fellow Brit, Lewis Hamilton among its list of clients.

**Dan Wheldon, No. 4 Delphi National Guard Honda Dallara:**

*“The changes we made prior to qualifying really improved the car, but it was a bit slick out there and that had a lot to do with the performance. It’s been a bit of a difficult weekend for us and we lost the first day because of the braking problem. The good thing is that the focus for this weekend is to do everything we can to prepare for next season and that’s what the Delphi National Guard team has done. We’re looking forward to the race tomorrow and we’ll think about trying some alternate strategies and do what we can to get a good result.”*

[www.1-800-GO-GUARD.com](http://www.1-800-GO-GUARD.com) - [www.pantherracing.com](http://www.pantherracing.com) - [www.delphi.com](http://www.delphi.com)