

# Qualifying Report

Nikon Indy 300

Surfers Paradise, Australia

October 25, 2008

## RYAN HUNTER-REAY AND RAHAL LETTERMAN RACING EARN TOP-FIVE GRID SPOT IN OZ

**SURFERS PARADISE, Australia** - Ryan Hunter-Reay (#17 Ethanol Dallara/Honda/Firestone) won his first Indy Car race in 2003 by adapting to changing weather conditions on the very same Surfers Paradise track where he found himself in battle today. Today the Floridian harkened back to the lessons learned on that victorious day to get himself and his Rahal Letterman Racing teammates a top-five starting spot for Sunday's Nikon Indy 300.

Saturday in qualifying for the Nikon Indy 300, Hunter-Reay and Rahal Letterman Racing adapted to changing conditions throughout the three-stage Firestone Fast Six qualifying, heating up as the track dried out to snare the fifth spot on the grid for Sunday's Indy Car race.



"It was a typical Surfers Paradise day where it rains and dries and things are all over the place," Hunter-Reay smiled. "I have experience with that here and I think we used that to our advantage today. We were fast in the wet and I think had it rained more we would have been even higher on the grid."

Hunter-Reay had qualified for two Firestone Fast Six sessions during the regular season, including most recently at Watkins Glen where he would go on to win the race.

Hunter-Reay led his first qualifying session as he chased a wet circuit to a time of 1:53.1807, taking the top spot on his seventh trip around the 2.795-mile street course, dropping Alex Tagliani back to second.

A drying track greeted Hunter-Reay in the second round of qualifying as the field of 12 cars saw their times drop nearly 10 seconds over the 15-minute session. He was eighth when action restarted after a late Mario Moraes spin, leaving him just two laps to climb into the Firestone Fast Six. He had made the change to Firestone slicks just prior to the caution, and used them to post a time of 1:40.8848 to move to sixth on the speed sheets.

Hunter-Reay, who led his morning practice group in a 30-minute session that took part before the rains came, stood third after three laps in the Firestone Fast Six and chipped away at his best time over his next two laps, settling for a best effort of 1:36.4030 (104.374 mph). He outran series runner-up Helio Castroneves to move to the inside of the third row for tomorrow's 60-lap affair, while Will Power took the pole over 2008 series titlist Scott Dixon.

"What is most important is that we get the Ethanol car up into the top five and we get better each session, which we have been able to do this weekend," Hunter-Reay said. "It was good for us to get into the Firestone Fast Six to end the season on a strong note, and we will look to capitalize on the great starting spot tomorrow. This place can throw out some crazy scenarios, so we'll try and stay near the front."

Tomorrow's Nikon Indy 300 gets underway at 10:30 p.m. Eastern Time and can be seen live on ESPN Classic.