



Briscoe to start third, Castroneves to start sixth in Surfers Paradise

SURFERS PARADISE, Australia (October 25, 2008) - Team Penske's Ryan Briscoe and Helio Castroneves will start from the second and third rows, respectively, in Sunday's Nikon Indy 300 after a pair of strong qualifying efforts Saturday.

Changing weather conditions made qualifying - which included three segments of 20 minutes, 15 minutes and 10 minutes, in which the fastest six from each advance to the next round - tricky, as a storm hit just as the first of the segments began. All teams switched to wet-tread tires for the first segment and half of the second segment before returning to race slicks. By the final "Firestone Fast Six" segment, the track was nearly dry, with only a few wet sections from Turns 9 through 12.

Briscoe, a Sydney, Australia native, recorded a lap of 1 minute 35.8007 seconds around the challenging 12-turn, 2.795-mile street course in the No. 6 Team Penske Honda/Dallara, good for third on the starting grid. Fellow Australian Will Power won the pole position; New Zealander Scott Dixon will start second.

"I was a bit nervous when the rain came down," said Briscoe about the sudden downpour that changed the tenor of what was to be a very quick qualifying session. "It's never fun going down a street course in the wet. It's pretty daunting. But the car seemed to work pretty well, the tires were really good in those conditions as I never had any moments of aquaplaning."

Briscoe wasn't able to drive hard until the track dried off. "At the end when we finally made it to the Fast Six, the track was just getting dry and it was the first time we were able to put a good lap together," he said. "It was the first time I was really able to attack the curbs - and I was just hoping for the best coming off of them. I rubbed the wall a few times, but I'm happy where we're starting tomorrow."

Helio Castroneves, driver of the No. 3 Team Penske Honda/Dallara, will start sixth after a lap of 1 minute, 36.7425 seconds. Castroneves credited a change the team made during an early segment that helped him get into the top six.

"We took a gamble when it started raining," said Castroneves about his first run. "We had 20 minutes in the first session and it looked like it was going to continue raining, so we decided to change part of the gearing of the car to get into the Fast Six. When we made the top six later in the afternoon, we kept to our plan and the gears. Ultimately the track dried out. It was a little bit hard to put together the right lap, but it paid off because top six at this place is pretty good. Hopefully we'll continue our good progress during the weekend and see what happens tomorrow."

The Nikon Indy 300 will be telecast live at 10:30 p.m. (EDT) on Saturday, Oct. 25 on ESPN Classic and will re-air on Sunday, Oct. 26 at 11 p.m. on ESPN2. The race will air live on the IMS Radio Network and at www.indycar.com.

Qualifying Saturday for the Nikon Indy 300 IndyCar Series event on the 2.795-mile Streets of Surfers Paradise, with starting position, car number in parentheses, driver, chassis-engine and speed:

1. (8) Will Power, Dallara-Honda, 105.977 mph

2. (9) Scott Dixon, Dallara-Honda, 105.067

3. (6) Ryan Briscoe, Dallara-Honda, 105.031 mph

4. (10) Dario Franchitti, Dallara-Honda, 104.885

5. (17) Ryan Hunter-Reay, Dallara-Honda, 104.374

6. (3) Helio Castroneves, Dallara-Honda, 104.008 mph

7. (36) Alex Tagliani, Dallara-Honda, 99.317

8. (11) Tony Kanaan, Dallara-Honda, 99.229

9. (02) Justin Wilson, Dallara-Honda, 98.606

10. (33) E.J. Viso, Dallara-Honda, 97.767

11. (14) Vitor Meira, Dallara-Honda, 96.440

12. (19) Mario Moraes, Dallara-Honda, 90.238

13. (06) Graham Rahal, Dallara-Honda, 87.030

14. (26) Marco Andretti, Dallara-Honda, 89.672

15. (5) Oriol Servià, Dallara-Honda, 86.994

16. (27) Hideki Mutoh, Dallara-Honda, 88.781

17. (18) Bruno Junqueira, Dallara-Honda, 85.258

18. (4) Dan Wheldon, Dallara-Honda, 88.328

19. (20) Ed Carpenter, Dallara-Honda, 84.721

20. (34) Jaime Camara, Dallara-Honda, 88.223

21. (23) Townsend Bell, Dallara-Honda, 84.607

22. (15) Buddy Rice, Dallara-Honda, 87.994

23. (7) Danica Patrick, Dallara-Honda, no speed

24. (2) A.J. Foyt IV, Dallara-Honda, no speed