



JWR Trio Shines in Rain Soaked Mosport Round

TRAFFORD, PA (September 4, 2006) – Mosport was a much anticipated venue for John Walko Racing. The team had what they felt was a strong handle of the storied Canadian circuit. However, the remnants of Hurricane Ernesto turned around the best laid plans of all teams when torrential rains fell on Saturday's race.

The weekend started out well despite the team being one of the few not to test at the facility in the weeks leading up to the event. The opening day of practice saw all three cars run in the top fifteen for much of the day with Kevin Lacroix dipping in to the top five once again.

John Walko, the team owner, was confident his team would be able to overcome the obstacle of not testing at Mosport previously.

"Obviously we would like to test at every track before each race, as most of our competitors have been doing, but for one reason or another we have not been able to do so since earlier in the season. We are confident though that regardless of circumstances, our crews and drivers are going to have the right package to be competitive when the green flag falls on race day."

Unfortunately for Walko and the rest of the crew, Friday practice proved to be unkind and would set their whole approach back a few steps. According to Walko it was a day to forget despite placing all three cars in the top twelve in morning practice.

"At the end of the day on Friday we ended up with three crashed race cars, it was a rough day. All three cars went off in succession early in the final session, each bringing out a red. So not only did we have broken race cars and missed practice, each guy was docked ten minutes in the next session for bringing out a red flag. It was a long day, and a long night."

Missing the final practice also forced the teams to revert to previous set-ups which were one cycle behind all of the other cars that did run a full practice. Combined with the shortened qualifying session thanks to the red flag penalties from Friday, the limited development resulted in the three cars qualifying deeper in the pack than expected.

Lacroix, who qualified an uncharacteristic eighth, noted that he was a bit off the pace of the quickest cars.

"I wasn't able to clock laps under 1:15 all weekend. We tried every possible setup in the five practice sessions on Thursday and Friday, to no avail. The #74 UniSelect was very good in the corners but was short on speed in the long straights. Mosport is a fabulous track where I would have liked to put more time in order to start on the two first rows."

Charles Anti qualified tenth while Russell Walker earned the twelfth spot on the grid for the race.

The race on the 2.65 mile circuit itself turned out to be an all together different affair than the drivers had to deal with all weekend as Hurricane Ernesto brought a deluge just in time for the start. Walker in fact was turning some of his first laps in competition in the rain in the Star Mazda Series. According to Walko it was a good effort for his newest racer.

"It was one of Russell's first rain races, he hasn't run much in the rain at all actually, and he did a great job of staying conservative and steady and he found himself in the top ten at the end of the day as a result. A great effort for him."

Walker was satisfied with his performance in the harrowing conditions.

"It was a foggy, torrential downpour, about the worst conditions you could imagine. I had a little bit of experience in practice at Mid Ohio but this was my first race in these conditions. It was pretty intense! I just brought it home; that was what we wanted to achieve. I could have been more aggressive but then I could have easily been caught out like a lot of other people."

After spotting the entire field a race in the Championship standings, Lacroix, who has been the aggressor all season, found himself solidly in second place at the start of the weekend. An opening lap miscue resulted in the Montreal native having to be aggressive enough to stay ahead of his Championship competitors yet conservative enough to ensure he finished the race.

"I'm still happy but I was looking for a podium, if not a victory. In the rain, I knew I would get some positions back because I've always been comfortable in wet conditions. I started seventh and took two positions in the first corners. But to avoid a drifting car, I had to brake and did a 360 spin that set me back in ninth. We ran only six or seven laps under green out of the 21. Every time a car is off course, we go full course yellow. With more green laps, I could have stepped on the podium."

The drive of the weekend though belonged to Anti according to Walko.

"Charles was the man in the race, he was unbelievable. He was pushing for the win, worked hard to get up there and went for the lead. Each time there was a restart he picked off one or two cars and went straight to the front, it was awesome."

Anti's bid for his first series win as well as the first team win for JWR came up a lap short however as he made contact with the leader while attempting to take the point.

"I started ninth and was up three spots on the first lap. We had a lot of one lap stints thanks to drivers going off early and I was able to pick off a car or two each lap. I was trying to work around the leader under braking in turn five and I carried just a little too much speed in and locked it up. It was too bad because I felt it was my race to win."

Despite the incident, which relegated the Star Mazda Rookie to thirteenth overall, the performance was a confidence booster.

"It was amazing. The only other wet conditions we had this year was a practice at Mid Ohio and I was second most of the session. So we went in to the race with a lot of confidence. I knew after the first lap we had the potential to do something special. Doing well in the wet is really a big deal. The results don't show it obviously but now I know we are among the fastest cars. This was a great confidence builder.

Overall Walko was happy with the weekend, which saw JWR move back to the top of the Team Championship standings, and looks forward to the next race at Road Atlanta where the team will take a slightly different approach in hopes of securing that first win.

"It was a pretty good weekend, nearly bringing home three top tens despite the ups and downs, and we have the team points lead back. Also, we are going testing this week at Atlanta in hopes of finding that last little bit that will take us to the next level.

The test at Road Atlanta is in preparation for JWR's next event as part of the American Le Mans Series at the Petit Le Mans weekend on September 27-29 at the famed circuit in Braselton, Georgia.

Mosport Results:

- 1 Ron White
- 2 Gerardo Bonilla
- 3 Mike Potekhen
- 4 Kevin Lacroix
- 9 Russell Walker
- 13 Charles Anti

Star Mazda Driver Championship:

- 1 Adrian Carrio 361
- 2 Kevin Lacroix 320
- 3 Ryan Justice 293
- 14 Charles Anti 193
- 17 Russell Walker 180

Star Mazda Team Championship:

- 1 John Walko Racing 192
- 2 World Speed 189
- 3 Apex Racing 154

Contact info@johnwalkoracing.com for more information regarding testing programs available for the 2006 season. Additional team information can be found at www.johnwalkoracing.com.