



## **Successful Sebring Test Sets Tone for Season**

TRAFFORD, PA (February 1, 2007) – Just one year ago the newly formed John Walko Racing had yet to turn a lap of practice. Despite the late start compared to their opponents in the Star Mazda Series, the team walked away at the end of the year with the Team Championship. While the turnaround makes a great story, the team has no intentions of repeating the scenario in 2007 and has started with an aggressive testing program that has the team looking toward another Championship winning season.

The most recent testing stop brought the team to Sebring for a preview of the opening round of the 2007 schedule. The test took place on the Paddock course which is a shorter layout than the race takes places on but incorporates several of the key components of the full course as team owner John Walko explains.

"The Paddock Course at Sebring takes in turns 16, 17 and 1 which are three of the four most important turns on the track. They are the hardest ones to come to grip with - turn seventeen is wide open, like a parking lot with no reference points, while turn one is probably one of the most intimidating turns in motorsports."

JWR brought two drivers from their successful 2006 team for the test, Charles Anti and Russell Walker. The chemistry between all of the returning team members was evident from the start according to Walko.

"It was probably the best test we've ever done. The team worked well as usual and everything clicked from the very start. The time we have under our belt together is really showing. Both cars turned nearly 200 miles each day with no problems at all. They ran from morning to night - no crashes, neither put a tire wrong."

Anti's last visit to Sebring was his first ever professional level race so returning to tackle the toughest aspects of the racetrack was a perfect way to prepare. Walker on the other hand, joined JWR after Sebring last season so this was his first opportunity to work with his engineer Eric Langbein and mechanic Scott Gates at the season opening facility.

Much of the success of the Sebring test can be attributed to team continuity, a rare commodity at this level of racing. In addition to Walker, Langbein and Gates returning as a unit Anti will once again be paired with engineer Steve Dreizler. Caleb Stream, mechanic for Kevin Lacroix's Rookie of the Year and Championship runner-up effort last season, moves over to join Anti and Dreizler for the entire 2007 campaign.

### **Team Quotes**

**Charles Anti:**

"I think the short course was better the way it worked out because the two most difficult turns that we run in the race were in that course and we were able to hit them twice as often. The test could not have gone any better. I think the worst I did was drop two tires off the entire two days. We made changes, some worked while some did not as is expected, and we were able to run a lot of miles. I really don't think we could have asked for anything more."

**Russell Walker:**

"We got up to speed immediately and had no problems at all, the cars were beautiful. The team worked really well together. Charles and I even ran a race simulation from a standing start for twenty laps, swapping positions, running together. Overall a perfect test, it exceeded all my expectations."

**Eric Langbein, Engineer for Russell Walker:**

"I was very pleased with the test; it was one of the most successful tests I've been involved with, ever. We had no mechanical failures, we went fast and the drivers were able to get used to the two most difficult corners at Sebring. Two of the past three years, Championships have been won by driver and team combinations that were in their second year together so that is a very powerful tool that we are trying to take advantage of."

**Steve Dreizler, Engineer for Charles Anti:**

"Everybody was thrilled with the way both guys ran and both cars performed. The impression I have is that both men showed up ready to work and both set about doing the job at hand with a professional demeanor. I look forward to the VIR test and getting back to work!"

The team continues their preparations for the upcoming season with a test at Virginia International Raceway. Opportunities are still available to join the 2006 Star Mazda Team Champions for the upcoming test and also for the 2007 season.

Drivers interested in participating in the VIR test or other upcoming tests are encouraged to contact the team soon. Also, drivers interested in discussing their 2007 racing programs should contact John Walko Racing at [info@johnwalkoracing.com](mailto:info@johnwalkoracing.com). Additional team information can be found at [www.johnwalkoracing.com](http://www.johnwalkoracing.com).