



## **Anti and Walker Return to Defend Championship with JWR**

TRAFFORD, PA (February 8, 2007) – Defending a Championship in a series as hotly contested as the Star Mazda Championship Series can be a daunting task. John Walko Racing recently took a huge step forward in that effort however, resigning two of the team's three drivers from its 2006 Team Championship winning roster.

Teammates Charles Anti and Russell Walker return for a second season each under the tutelage of the experienced JWR crew. Each driver will be part of their own three man unit, paired with an engineer and mechanic, within the overall team for the entire season. This is a continuation of the approach that helped guide JWR to the Team Championship in their rookie season.

John Walko, team owner, believes this approach is crucial in developing young talent in to consistent front running contenders.

"There is something to be said for continuity, working with the same engineer, already speaking the same language, knowing the team, knowing the car, knowing what to expect from everything. It is more than just knowing the tracks. People don't understand how human this is, it is more than just sticking the best drivers in the best cars and going fast. There is a lot to the relationships involved."

For Pittsburgh native Anti, those relationships will include Steve Dreizler returning as Engineer and Mechanic Caleb Stream. While Anti and Dreizler have a long history together, Walko noted that his driver and Stream have also worked well together as part of a quite successful off-season testing program. A program that has revealed an all together different driver than the one that made his professional debut at Sebring just last season.

"We have already done a winter testing program with Charles and I can see a difference in him already. He knows the tracks now and the whole concept of Pro Racing is nothing new now, so the second year we expect to see a big difference in him. Last year was really his first season of Pro Racing at any level so part of the learning curve last year was learning to deal with the intensity level of a Pro weekend.

Walker enters the 2007 season with a very familiar system as he is reunited with both his engineer and mechanic from his rookie season, Eric Langbein and Scott Gates. The Dallas, Texas based racer looks to build on a strong finish in 2006 that resulted in three top ten finishes in the final four races. After several strong runs in testing, Walko believes his second year driver will be a threat this season.

"From the beginning of testing, Russell, Eric and Scott picked up right where they left off at the end of last season. Sebring in particular showed that as a team they were communicating very well and Russell was on top of his game behind the wheel."

The return of two veteran drivers, and the chemistry readily apparent between them and their crews, has Walko excited about the team's prospects in the coming season.

"With a full year under their belt I think they'll be completely different drivers this year. And we have seen great speed already this year in winter testing. Both Charles and Russell should be competing for wins and championships in 2007. If these two drivers are able to capitalize on their chances we should be in contention for the Team Championship as well. Although, we would like our chances even better if we were able to secure a third driver to round out the team

### **Team Quotes**

#### **Charles Anti:**

"I'll be working with Steve Dreizler again and Caleb Stream as mechanic. Caleb's car finished second in the Championship last year with Kevin Lacroix driving. I like to keep my expectations open but I think we can run for wins and maybe even the Championship."

#### **Russell Walker:**

"I'm happy to be joining John Walko Racing for another year. I'm confident they are a Championship level team and I'm excited to be working with them. The team continuity will be better than ever. That is going to play a huge role in the Championship this year."

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

"I think there is an advantage in a specific driver working with a specific engineer and mechanic combo as a team. I know Russell, Scott and I are all looking forward to moving in to next year and having some continuity. It is a very rare thing at this level of racing for this kind of opportunity to be available."

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

"Obviously it says a lot for the team that both Charles and Russell are returning to the team for their second year with us. I look forward to both of them challenging for the Championship this year. Charles and I will be working with Caleb this year. His cars have finished second twice in two years for the Championship so we'll see if we can't do one better for him this year."

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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).