

## KANSAS RACE REPORT

**GEARBOX TROUBLE DOOMS RAHAL LETTERMAN RACING AND RYAN HUNTER-REAY IN KANSAS** KANSAS CITY- While it is true that the University of Kansas is in Lawrence and Kansas State University is located in Manhattan, the state's School of Hard Knocks is apparently centered at the 1.5-mile Kansas Speedway oval, just outside of Kansas City. Rahal Letterman Racing and driver Ryan Hunter-Reay (#17 Ethanol Dallara/Honda/Firestone) started a promising day in the 12th spot, but needed just 20 laps to learn how their day was going to go. A gearbox problem left Hunter-Reay without fifth gear, necessitating a lengthy pit stop to rectify the problem. After that, all the Floridian could do was further his education on his Indy Car as he soldiered on to an 18th-place finish in today's RoadRunner Turbo 300 at Kansas Speedway. The finish was the team's lowest of the 2008 IndyCar Series campaign and dropped the team two spots in the standings to 15th after four races. "It's a shame that things like this continue to happen because it seems like we could have had a pretty good car today," lamented Hunter-Reay. "We continue to get hit by things that set us back. I feel like if we just had a race where we didn't have any luck at all - good or bad - we would have a top-five finish." Hunter-Reay started reporting a problem getting his Honda-powered machine into fifth gear about 20 trips into the 200-lap affair, in a problem that first manifested itself as an engine that was hitting the rev limiter well before it should. Eventually the problem evolved into a vibration along with the loss of fifth gear, forcing the team to roll down Pit Lane to change the gear stack. That process cost the squad 23 laps as mechanics replaced the offending gears, dooming Hunter-Reay to spend the rest of the day turning laps in the hope that someone would make a mistake and give the team added positions. Five drivers obliged before the end of the race, allowing Hunter-Reay and the RLR squad to make up five spots after their gearbox change, moving him into the top 20 by the end of the race, which was won by Dan Wheldon. "It's tough to take when you look at the final standings, because we were faster than a few of the guys that ended up in the top 10," said Hunter-Reay. "We'll just go back to the shop and get back to work. We have a long month ahead of us at Indianapolis and I can't wait to get started on it." Once the solid pit work eliminated the gear problem, Hunter-Reay and the team were able to spend the remainder of their track time working on the car - in what amounted to an impromptu test session. Hunter-Reay worked on different configurations using his in-car tools, collecting data on how the car reacted in traffic or in clean air, logging information that will be used to help fine-tune the car for the upcoming Indianapolis 500. The RLR team, along with drivers Ryan Hunter-Reay and Alex Lloyd, will start preparation next weekend for this year's Indianapolis 500. Both drivers will participate in the track's Rookie Orientation Program on both Sunday and Monday of next week, since neither driver has competed on the cavernous 2.5-mile oval in the Indy Cars. Both drivers will complete a mandatory four-step process in those two days, leading to the first day of full-field practice for the 92nd running of the Indy 500 - which takes place on Tuesday, May 6.