

Race Report

Camping World Grand Prix
Watkins Glen International
July 6, 2008

RYAN HUNTER-REAY TAKES RAHAL LETTERMAN RACING BACK TO VICTORY LANE AT THE GLEN

WATKINS GLEN, N.Y. - Rahal Letterman Racing broke a four-year victory drought and **Ryan Hunter-Reay** (#17 Ethanol Dallara/Honda/Firestone) confirmed his status as one of the IndyCar Series up-and-coming stars by winning Sunday's Camping World Grand Prix at the Glen.

Hunter-Reay started third and was the equal of the field for each of the 60 laps that saw the IndyCar Series' finest battle on the 3.4-mile Watkins Glen road course. He wrested the lead from Darren Manning on the first turn of a Lap 52 restart and pulled away by 2.4 seconds at the checkered flag to score his first victory since joining Rahal Letterman Racing in 2007.

"This is big for momentum, and this is only going to be better as we go forward. I'm just so happy to give a win to some of these guys. Like Bobby said, these guys work so hard," Hunter-Reay said. "It's unreal. These guys that are getting me spots on pit lane are the same guys that go back home and repair the cars. It's amazing how hard they work. To give them a win is huge, and to do it with Ethanol on the side of the car is awesome."



Hunter-Reay ran third for most of the day save for the occasional laps when an out-of-sequence squad of nearly 10 cars led when the leaders pitted. With 18 laps to go, Hunter-Reay trailed Scott Dixon and Ryan Briscoe while Manning led after staying out during Enrique Bernoldi's Lap 41 spin, but at the time Manning was not expected to have the fuel to make it to the end without pitting.

The caution was extended twice by accidents while running behind the pace car, but the first one had nowhere near the consequences of the second. In the latter, Dixon spun while warming his tires and left Briscoe nowhere to go except into him, taking both cars out of the race and promoting Hunter-Reay to second behind Manning. The Floridian wasted no time on the restart, making a strong restart and plunging to the inside of Turn One to take the lead from Manning at the drop of the green flag, taking the point just after narrowly escaping getting caught in the Dixon/Briscoe spin.

"Right when it happened it was like a scene out of 'Days of Thunder.' I couldn't see where it was, where the opening was or cars, nothing. It was just black and dirt in front of me, a cloud of it. So I picked far left and luckily it was open," recalled Hunter-Reay. "That was when I knew it was my day and I had to do something with it. I tried to get a good run on Darren and I went to the inside and from there we checked out. That's very satisfying because we had to race hard to the end to win."

Hunter-Reay had to fend off one more big challenge after taking the lead as Jaime Camara's spin brought out a caution flag with nine laps to go. But the restart threat ended at the green flag as Hunter-Reay roared away from Manning into the first turn and held he and Kanaan at bay, giving the Ohio-based team its first victory since winning at Michigan in 2004. The victory was the 20th in the open-wheel history of Rahal Letterman Racing, and gives the team wins in nine of its 16 seasons.

"I'm so happy for our team and all the mechanics who work so hard. This is a brutal series in terms of the timing of the race, the tempo every weekend," said team co-owner Bobby Rahal. "Really what it boils down to is you have to have the right person in the driver's seat. And this guy, since the day he came on to the team and almost a year ago now, Mid-Ohio, he elevated the performance of the team immediately. We've just come off a big shunt at Richmond, and we had to repair the car. These guys work like you can't believe. So I'm just so pleased for them. So many of our guys on the team this is their first win, and that even makes it even more special."

The win boosts Hunter-Reay into ninth in the IndyCar Series points and leaves him just 21 points out of the top five. The team has little time for its long-awaited celebration as the series heads to Nashville's concrete oval next weekend for the Firestone Indy 200. Saturday night's race gets underway at 8 p.m. Eastern Time and can be seen on ESPN2.