



2007 Star Mazda Championship Prize Money Approaches \$1.5 Million

Over the past seventeen years, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear has grown into one of the most prolific, successful and richest driver development series in all of auto racing.

Many top drivers began, or accelerated, their careers in the Star Mazda Championship. Recent alumni include such top open-wheel racers as Champ Car star Graham Rahal, IRL standout Marco Andretti and American F1 driver Scott Speed. Also on the list is Michael McDowell, the 2004 Star Mazda champion who has raced Champ Cars, Daytona Prototypes and is now battling to become the ARCA stock car champion in his rookie year. And the 2005 Star Mazda Champion, Raphael Matos, graduated via the Mazda Motorsports Ladder to the Champ Car Atlantic series, won the 2007 championship and will move up to Champ Car in 2008.

The Star Mazda Championship is now a major step on the Mazda Motorsports Ladder, adding to the already substantial array of benefits that come from racing in the series. The Motorsports Ladder is a unique scholarship program that reaches all the way from karting to Champ Car. The winner of a shootout among 2007 karting champions will get a scholarship in the 2008 Skip Barber series, while the Skip Barber champion moves up to Star Mazda. The Star Mazda champion moves up to the Champ Car Atlantic Series Powered by Mazda and the Atlantic champion gets \$2 million from Champ Car toward a Champ Car drive.

This discussion of prize money makes a closer examination of the financial and career implications of racing in the Star Mazda Championship even more relevant to young racers 16 and older intent on climbing the Motorsports ladder. For example, the Star Mazda Championship is an extremely cost-effective series with a lower cost-per-lap than the US Formula BMW series. And Star Mazda race cars turn laps within 2-3 seconds of an Atlantic car... for considerably less than half the budget. For young European drivers exploring their options, Star Mazda race cars are comparable to Formula 3 and Palmer Audi, at a substantially lower cost and with the added benefits of substantial prize money and national television exposure.

Star Mazda Championship races are held on major motorsports weekends, racing in front of the crowds drawn by American Le Mans, Champ Car and the Grand-Am Rolex series. This diversity allows young drivers to develop their skills on a variety of tracks, including natural terrain road courses as well as street and airport circuits. All races are broadcast in a 1-hour show on the SPEED Channel and re-broadcast overseas on networks like SkySports in the UK.

Unrestricted testing promotes rapid development of a driver's on-track, car setup and driver/engineer communications skills, and the 'single-spec' engineering of Star Mazda Championship race cars showcases driving talent over big budgets. All Star Mazda Championship drivers race identical high-tech open-wheel cars that feature a carbon fiber chassis, fully-adjustable suspension and a sequential 6-speed gearbox. Power is provided by Mazda's legendary 'Renesis' rotary engine that produces 240 horsepower, top speeds of over 150 mph and 0 to 60 mph acceleration of 2.8 seconds. This engine is so reliable that it can last an entire racing season without a re-build, helping to keep the cost of racing in Star Mazda down to a fraction of the budget required to compete in any comparable open wheel series in the U.S. or Europe.

Total prizes, with money paid down through 15th-place in the championship, approaches \$1.5 million. The series champion not only gets a sponsorship to race in next year's Champ Car Atlantic Powered by Mazda series, but also a cash award of \$100,000 plus a brand-new Mazda RX-8 sports car. The series' 'Rookie of the Year' award is worth \$10,000 and contingency awards from participating suppliers such as Goodyear, Quartermaster Clutches, BBS Wheels, VP Fuels, Performance Friction Brakes and Staubli dry break systems, boost the total to almost \$1.5 million.

"The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear offers an opportunity to race in the United States in one of the most successful and affordable manufacturer-supported driver development series," says Star Mazda Championship founder and President Gary Rodrigues. "The Star Mazda Championship is also a gateway series to many other forms of racing because once you learn to drive an open-wheel car competitively, it becomes much easier to adapt to – and excel in – other kinds of cars. Graduates of the Star Mazda Championship have gone on to salaried rides in F1, Champ Car, Indy 500, prototypes, sports cars and stock cars. The racing world is full of Star Mazda graduates and we're proud of them. But we also look forward every year to a new class of young hotshoes who will be the racing stars of tomorrow."

It's quite probable that this year's Star Mazda Championship will be decided at the upcoming Round Eleven at Road Atlanta. 18 year-old Californian Dane Cameron, who has won previous open-wheel and karting championships but is in his first year of Star Mazda Championship racing needs only to finish 8th or better to become the first rookie in the series 17-year history to win the championship. Cameron, who has won three races, started from the pole five times and scored four podium finishes is already experiencing the benefits of a high-profile season in the Star Mazda Championship; he was invited to co-drive with Michael Valiante in the Chip Ganassi w/Felix Sabates #19 Z-Line Designs/ Mission Residential Riley Daytona Prototype in the Grand-Am Rolex Series season finale SunChaser 1000 at Miller Motorsports Park on September 15.

On-track action at Road Atlanta begins with testing sessions on Tuesday, October 2 and a pair of timed practice sessions on Wednesday, October 3. Qualifying to set the starting grid for the race will take place from 4:05 pm to 4:50 pm Thursday, October 4. The 45-minute Round Eleven of the 2007 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear will take the green flag at 1:50 pm Friday, October 5. The season finale takes place at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in Northern California October 19 – 20.

Star Mazda races are broadcast on the SPEED Channel, with the Road Atlanta event scheduled to air on Saturday, October 13 at 12 noon ET. To confirm this air time and find out when future Star Mazda races will air, log on to www.speedtv.com/programs.

For more information on the Star Mazda Championship and its drivers, as well as the Mazda Motorsports ladder system, please visit www.starmazda.com and www.mazdausa.com.

On any given weekend, there are more Mazdas on the road-race tracks of America than any other brand of vehicle. At the track, you'll see MX-5 Miata, RX-8, MAZDA3, MAZDA6, RX-7 and other vintage Mazda models competing, because every Mazda has the Soul of a Sports Car.

For more information on the various Mazda spec series, visit:

www.champcaratlantic.com

www.starmazda.com

www.skipbarber.com

www.mx-5cup.com

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