



Contact: Peter Frey / (818) 906-6997  
StarMazdaPR@aol.com

## **STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP ANNOUNCES STANDING STARTS FOR 2008 SEASON**

Pacoima, CA (December 17, 2007) – The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear, one of the top open-wheel racing and driver development series in North America, announced today that it will implement standing starts for all 12 races in the 2008 season.

“We are making this change to keep our series in line with other top open-wheel racing series, including Formula One, Champ Car and Champ Car Atlantic and, all of whom utilize standing starts at many events,” says Star Mazda Championship President Gary Rodrigues. “In keeping with our mission to provide the best possible training for young drivers on their way up the open-wheel racing ladder, we have made the decision that a well-rounded education must include experience with standing starts. This new phase in the evolution of the Star Mazda Championship will begin at our season-opener in Sebring on March 14, 2008.”

The technology used in the new standing start format is unique and currently undergoing final testing and development at the headquarters of the Star Mazda Championship in Pacoima, California. A series of 18 x 18-inch mobile LED panels, all wirelessly connected to the starting computer, will be placed at intervals alongside the starting grid, so that all drivers in the typically large Star Mazda Championship starting field of 30+ cars have a clear view.

Horizontal rows of super-bright red LED’s will begin to glow, moving up the screen like a thermometer. When the final row of lights comes on and the screen is full red, the starting computer will randomly select a delay of between .5 and 2.5 seconds, after which all the red LEDs will go out simultaneously and the entire screen will turn green, signaling the official start of the race.

“This system will have to be absolutely bullet-proof and we’ll be doing extensive on-site testing at various racetracks before our debut at Sebring,” says Tony Rodrigues, the Star Mazda Championship’s Director of Timing and Scoring. “There will be challenges, particularly with a wireless system such as this, but once we get all the bugs ironed out, we’ll have something completely unique that will enhance the quality of our races.”

The entire process will be viewed by series officials in race control on multiple live TV feeds, making it immediately apparent if any driver jumps the start. If for any reason officials abort the start, the screens will remain red, fading back down toward the bottom of the screens. The situation that caused the abort will be resolved, with the Race Director imposing penalties on drivers if warranted, and the sequence will begin again.

“Having thirty or more cars smoking their tires off the starting line will provide a more spectacular show for the fans at the track and on TV, but will also be safer for the drivers,” says Star Mazda Championship Race Director Kent Williamson. “Rather than have them all bunched up and at top speed going into the first turn, as happens with a rolling start, they’ll be spread out a bit more. Not only will this reduce the incidence of

first-lap, first-turn multi-car accidents, but it will also give them room right from the first lap to start racing and making safe passes. I think this is a great idea and I'm looking forward to seeing it in action at Sebring."

The Star Mazda Championship open-wheel race car is a single-spec, high-tech machine with a carbon-fiber chassis, push-rod suspension, Goodyear radial racing tires and a 6-speed sequential gearbox mated to a race-prepared 250-horsepower Mazda Renesis rotary engine. The entire package is designed for strength, speed, easy maintenance, and reliability.

"Although this will be the first time we've used standing starts, the car was originally designed with them in mind and we have documented over a thousand test launches without a single failure of any existing driveline part," says Star Mazda Competition Director Ron Roland. "Individual teams will, of course, be practicing standing starts during pre-season testing, and we'll be in touch with them to be certain, but the engine, tires, transmission and clutch are all easily up to the task and we're not anticipating any mechanical issues."

A post-season test of the standing start concept utilizing a Star Mazda Championship car owned by the series and with 2007 champion Dane Cameron at the wheel produced an enthusiastic assessment. "The car has so much power it's easy to light the tires up and do a smoky burnout, and seeing thirty or more cars all doing it at the same time will be spectacular," says Cameron. "But that isn't necessarily the fastest way to get going. It's definitely going to be a learning process for the drivers, but they'll be better-prepared when they eventually move up to other series."

For more information on the Star Mazda Championship and its drivers, as well as the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Development Ladder, please visit [www.starmazda.com](http://www.starmazda.com) and [www.mazdausa.com](http://www.mazdausa.com).

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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:

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Dean Case / Communications Officer / MAZDASPEED Motorsports  
Office - (310) 755-7403 / Cell - (310) 318-4582 / E-mail: [dean@RWB-LLC.com](mailto:dean@RWB-LLC.com)

