



## **MAZDA AND THE STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP EXTEND ONE OF THE LONGEST PARTNERSHIPS IN THE HISTORY OF AUTO RACING**

Road America, WI (August 8, 2008) -- The Star Mazda Championship and Mazda North American Operations today jointly announced a 5-year extension of the automaker's title sponsorship of one of North America's premier open-wheel driver development series. The agreement runs through the 2013 season and formalizes 23 years of continuous cooperation between Mazda and the Star Mazda Championship -- one of the longest-running and most successful motorsports partnerships in the history of the sport.

"Our relationship with Mazda is one of the principal strengths of our series," says Star Mazda Championship founder and President, Gary Rodrigues. "And the length of that relationship, which has existed since the debut of the original Formula Mazda series in 1991, produces both credibility and stability in an otherwise confusing open-wheel environment. With this new long-term contract in place, the Star Mazda Championship can get on with its mission of advancing the careers of each new generation of drivers while having the resources to grow and develop to keep pace with the evolving structure of the racing industry in North America."

Over the past 18 years, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear has grown into one of the most prolific and successful open-wheel driver development series in all of auto racing. In 2008, the value of series prizes totals \$1.5 million and includes a full-season sponsorship from the *MAZDASPEED* Motorsports Driver Development Ladder for the Star Mazda series champion to move up and race in the Atlantic Championship Powered by Mazda. Plus, courtesy of Mazda, a full scholarship into the Star Mazda Championship is awarded to the champion of the 2008 Skip Barber National Series Presented by Mazda.

Many top drivers began, or accelerated, their careers in the Star Mazda Championship. Recent alumni include such top open-wheel racers as IRL winners Graham Rahal and Marco Andretti, American ex-F1 driver Scott Speed and rising NASCAR Sprint Cup driver Michael McDowell (the 2004 Star Mazda champion), as well as both drivers of the Mazda-powered Lola LMP2 prototype being raced in the American Le Mans series -- Gerardo Bonilla and Ben Devlin. 2005 Star Mazda champion Raphael Matos, after moving up to Atlantic in 2006 and winning the championship in 2007, is now racing in the American LeMans Series and the Indy Lights series for Andretti/Green. The 2007

Star Mazda Champion, Dane Cameron, is competing in the Atlantic Championship on a scholarship from Mazda.

“The Star Mazda series has played several key roles in Mazda motorsports history. It maintained a strong Mazda presence in professional road racing in the 1990’s. In the past two years it has become the anchor to the open wheel side of the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development ladder as we added Skip Barber below and Atlantics above. We’ve enjoyed 18 great years with Gary and his team and are looking forward to the next five,” said Robert Davis, Senior Vice President, Product Development and Quality, and the man responsible for Mazda’s North American motorsports operations under the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Development banner.

This year, the Star Mazda Championship races are held on major motorsports weekends, racing in front of the same crowds as American Le Mans and the Grand-Am Rolex series. Also in 2008, the Star Mazda Championship will be the headliner at Mazda Grand Prix events at Portland International Raceway and New Jersey Motorsports Park, and will share top billing with the Atlantic Championship at Trois Rivières, Quebec. 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-design’ 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 value of the series’ prizes, with money paid down through 15<sup>th</sup>-place in the championship, is \$1.5 million, including contingency awards from other series sponsors such as Goodyear, Quartermaster Clutches, BBS Wheels, VP Fuels, Performance Friction Brakes and Staubli dry break systems.

Mazda North American Operations provides racing support in North America through MAZDASPEED MOTORSPORTS DEVELOPMENT. Headquartered in Irvine, Calif., Mazda North American Operations oversees the sales, marketing, parts and customer service support of Mazda vehicles in the United States, Canada and Mexico through nearly 900 dealers.

Mazda supports all Mazda drivers competing in any sanctioned racing event in the U.S. or Canada. Mazda supports all types of racing, including Road Racing, Rally, Drag, Off-Road and Autocross. On any given weekend, there are more Mazdas on the road-race tracks of America than any other brand of vehicle. More than 9,000 grassroots racers compete in various classes with the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) and the National Auto Sport Association (NASA). Racers who are years away from earning a driver's license can now begin their professional motorsports careers in the Mazda family. A driver can begin in go-karts and progress through the Skip Barber series, Club Racing Formula Mazda, professional Star Mazda and finally to the Atlantic Championship, all with Mazda. This is the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder in action.

Mazda first lined up to race its cars in the 1960s. Since then, the company has boasted a strong global presence in the world of auto racing in an effort to support its product. From Mazda's international racing debut in the 1968 84-Hour Marathon de la Route endurance competition in Nürburgring, Germany (with the Cosmo Sport 110S, the company's first rotary-engine sports car) to its victory at Le Mans with the four-rotor 787B sports racer, the company continues to test its high-performance prowess in various motorsports initiatives. Mazda's Zoom-Zoom spirit is evident not only in its racing vehicles, but also in its customer products; every vehicle the company builds has the soul of a sports car.

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

