



STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP AND GOODYEAR EXTEND TITLE SPONSORSHIP THROUGH END OF 2013 SEASON



Pacoima, CA (Nov. 2, 2008) – The Star Mazda Championship and Goodyear have announced a five-year extension of the tiremaker's title sponsorship of the hugely successful driver development racing series; it will continue to be known as the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear through the end of the 2013 season and Goodyear will be the exclusive provider of Goodyear

Eagle radial racing tires utilized by the Star Mazda open-wheel racing cars.

With the recent announcement of a similar five-year extension of series title sponsorship by Mazda North America, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear has now created a stable and secure environment for the future growth and expansion of the series.

"The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear is now in a unique position with respect to the evolving motorsports landscape in the U.S. and around the world," says Star Mazda Championship founder and President Gary Rodrigues. "Growth requires stability of rules and relationships, and we now have both. Our sponsors, teams and drivers all know what to expect for the next five years – the most cost-effective, career-enhancing open-wheel racing on track today. We have a variety of exciting new initiatives under development, such as our recently-announced partnership with iRacing.com, and we now have the solid foundation on which to build them into a racing series ideally suited to both the changes and opportunities that lie ahead."

Goodyear began supplying the Star Mazda Championship more than a decade ago, initially with a production run of 500 tires that they expected would last for several seasons. That number has now grown to more than 7,500 racing tires -- per season -- for the national Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear and the various regional Star Mazda series running around the country.

"The future of open wheel racing in North America is in good hands with this series," said Bob Shaffer, Goodyear's sales account manager for sports car racing. "We're honored they have made our Goodyear radials their tire of choice."

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 2009, the value of series prizes will again total \$1.5 million and include 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 the *MAZDASPEED* Ladder, a full scholarship into the Star Mazda Championship has been awarded to the champion of the 2008 Skip Barber National Series Presented by Mazda, Connor Daly, son of racing legend Derek Daly.

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, won the 2008 Indy Lights championship and has signed to run full-time in the 2009 Indy Racing League season.

"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 last two years it has become the anchor of the *MAZDASPEED* open wheel ladder," says 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.

For 2009, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear will feature an 11-weekend, 13-race schedule that includes races on natural terrain road courses, street circuits and ovals. Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear will be sharing the spotlight on major race weekends with American Le Mans, Grand-Am, the Atlantic Championship, NASCAR Nationwide and Craftsman Truck Series, as well as two double-header *MAZDASPEED* weekends where Star Mazda will be the headline series. All races will be broadcast during weekend prime time on SPEED TV in the U.S. and on various sports TV networks overseas such as SkySports in the U.K.

Drivers 16 years of age and older are welcome to compete in the Star Mazda Championship, which also features classes for more mature drivers in whom the competitive fire still burns brightly. The Expert Series will feature drivers aged 30 to 44, while Master Series drivers are 45 and older. The top-finishing Expert and Master at each race, along with the top-3 finishers, will participate in podium ceremonies at each race.

Unique features of the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear include F1-style standing starts (except on ovals) and unrestricted testing to promote rapid development of a driver's on-track, car setup and driver/engineer communications skills. 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.

Total value of the series' prizes, with money paid down through 15th-place in the championship, is \$1.5 million, including contingency awards from other series sponsors such as Goodyear, iRacing.com Quartermaster Clutches, BBS Wheels, VP Fuels, Performance Friction Brakes and Staubli dry break systems.

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. For information, interviews and photos, contact Star Mazda Communications Director Peter Frey at (818) 398-5733 or StarMazdaPR@aol.com.

For more information on Goodyear Racing, please visit www.racegoodyear.com. For information, interviews and photos, please contact Lee Elder at (805) 981-8678 or speedylee@sprynet.com.

