



CLIMBING THE LADDER -- 2005 STAR MAZDA CHAMPION RAPHAEL MATOS WINS 2008 INDY LIGHTS CHAMPIONSHIP



Raphael Matos, the talented Brazilian racer who won the 2005 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear, has clinched his fourth open-wheel racing title in six years by winning the 2008 Firestone Indy Lights championship for AFS/Andretti Green with a record of three wins, five poles and 13 top-10 finishes. His performance also earned him 'Rookie of the Year' honors.

In addition, Matos also won the 2008 Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series presented by Crown Royal Cask No. 16 season-ender this past weekend. After winning the GT class in the season-opening Rolex 24 At Daytona back in January, Matos made his return to the series by winning in his first Daytona

Prototype start Saturday, the SunRichGourmet.com 1000 presented by The Grand and Little America Hotels at Miller Motorsports Park. Matos joined regular drivers Ian James and John Pew (also a Star Mazda Championship graduate) to give the No. 6 Michael Shank Racing Ford Riley its first Rolex Series victory. The team became the third first-time Daytona Prototype winner in three races at Miller Motorsports Park.

"The car was very strong at the end of the race and that's why I was able to pull a gap. I love this series and I love the cars. I love driving them. I had a great team - Mike Shank did an amazing job, and John Pew and Ian James did a great job. The crew had an amazing pit stop, and that's what put us in first position. This is a happy moment for everyone and a great way to finish the season. I was a little bit concerned about the car before the race, but the car had a great balance and the balanced improved throughout the race. That's why were able to win at the end."

Matos began his climb up the open-wheel ladder with the Formula Dodge National Championship in 2003. He moved up to the Star Mazda Championship in 2004, finishing 7th in the



championship. Returning to Star Mazda in 2005, he won the first four races, captured three pole positions and scored eight podium finishes in 12 races on his way to winning the championship.



2005 was the first year of the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder, and Matos utilized the sponsorship provided by the program to move up to the Atlantic Championship Powered by Mazda in 2006. He finished 4th in the championship with three second-place finishes and also drove four races in the Indy pro Series, winning the first two. Returning to the Atlantic

Championship in 2007 with Sierra Enterprises, Matos scored six wins in twelve starts on his way to the championship.

Never one to rest on his laurels, Matos is right back behind the wheel this weekend at Miller Motorsports Park in the Rolex Series season finale, co-driving the #6 Michael Shank Racing Ford Riley with John Pew and Ian James.

"It was such a great year," Matos said. "We accomplished everything that we wanted to this year. We wanted to win the championship and we wanted to be Rookie of the Year. It's just a great feeling to do it."

Next on his list of accomplishments is to graduate to the IndyCar Series and race alongside fellow Star Mazda Championship graduates Marco Andretti and Graham Rahal. Matos served as a test driver for Andretti Green Racing's IndyCar Series program in addition to his racing duties with AFS/Andretti Green Racing and knows he's capable of being successful, especially on the road/street courses the series will visit in 2009.

"I have been able to prove myself not just to everyone watching the series, but also to Andretti Green Racing (by winning the title in Firestone Indy Lights)," he said. "This puts me in good position with a team that I feel is the best team out there. I'm looking forward to what the future holds for me."

For young drivers like Matos on their way up the Motorsports ladder, the Star Mazda Championship – now in its 18th year as one of the most prolific and successful open-wheel driver development series in auto racing today -- is the college basketball, the triple-A baseball, the Junior A hockey of auto racing, a high-speed training ground for future stars of the sport, such as the most recent American Formula One driver Scott Speed, Indy Car stars Marco Andretti and Graham Rahal and the newest addition to Michael Waltrip's NASCAR Sprint Cup team, Michael McDowell, who won the 2004 Star Mazda Championship.

The Star Mazda Championship is now a major step on the *MAZDASPEED* Motorsports Driver Development Ladder, a unique scholarship program that reaches all the way from karting to the top levels of open-wheel racing. The winner of a shootout among 2008 karting champions will get a scholarship in the 2009 Skip Barber series, while the Skip Barber champion moves up to Star Mazda while the Star Mazda champion moves up to the Atlantic Series Powered by Mazda.

Raphael Matos is a graduate of this ladder program, and so is Dane Cameron, the 2007 Star Mazda champion who is racing the #19 Genoa Racing/Mazda/Finlay Motorsports/ Lynx Racing Swift 016.a in the 2008 Atlantic Championship Powered by *MAZDASPEED* Ladder. At the other end of the ladder, the 2007 Skip Barber Pro Series champion, Joel Miller, is using his *MAZDASPEED* Ladder sponsorship to race the #20 JDC Motorsports/K&N Air Filters Mazda in the 2008 Star Mazda Championship. And 2007 karting champion Connor De Phillippi is racing in the BFGoodrich/Skip Barber National Championship Presented by Mazda, again with sponsorship from the *MAZDASPEED* Ladder.



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 15th-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.

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 interviews, photos, etc., contact Star Mazda Championship Communications Director Peter Frey at (818) 398-5733 / StarMazdaPR@aol.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.atlanticchampionship.com

www.starmazda.com

www.skipbarber.com

www.mx-5cup.com

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