



**STAR MAZDA BECOMES AN OFFICIAL PART OF THE IRL'S NEW 'ROAD TO INDY,' ADDING A NEW DIMENSION TO ITS ROLE AS A PREMIER OPEN-WHEEL DRIVER DEVELOPMENT SERIES**

PRI Show / Orlando, FL (December 10, 2009) -- The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear, now entering its 20th year as one of North America's premier open-wheel driver development series and a well-established gateway to many forms of motorsports, takes on an added dimension as a part of the official "Road to Indy" developmental system announced today by the Indy Racing League.



In conjunction with the new Cooper Tires Presents the USF2000 National Championship powered by Mazda and Firestone Indy Lights, the Road to Indy provides a clearly-defined path for career-

minded young drivers to progress up through the ranks to compete in the IZOD IndyCar Series and the Indianapolis 500.

Drivers from each of the "Road To Indy" series will benefit from the program in both immediate and longer-term ways. In 2010, all three series that make up the "Road to Indy" program will join the IZOD IndyCar Series at the Streets of St. Petersburg and Iowa Speedway. In addition, the drivers and teams will participate in various Indy Racing League programs such as:

- Inclusion in online advertising promoting the Road to Indy program
- A micro Website dedicated to Road to Indy housed and promoted on the League's official website IndyCar.com
- Opportunities to develop business-to-business relationships with Indy Racing League teams, sponsors and manufacturers.
- Invitation to participate in the Road to Indy Summit at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in May on the same weekend they will be competing in the "Night Before the 500."

"Today's announcement is a formidable milestone in the 20th year of our history as a development series," said Gary Rodrigues, founder of the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear. "For the Star Mazda Championship to be honored with a formalized position in the pathway to an Indy car driving career is not only gratifying to us, but provides a clarity that

open wheel drivers and fans have long been seeking. Now young driving talent can know where they need to be and where they are trying to go. Race fans can now determine where to watch for tomorrow's stars.

"I am personally proud of the fact that this program renders assistance to aspiring drivers and race teams by providing them access to business partners at the very pinnacle of our sport. The potential value of features included in the Road to Indy, such as the Indy Summit in May, is difficult to overstate. Much of the networking and support structure that young drivers especially need to cultivate will now be more accessible to them."

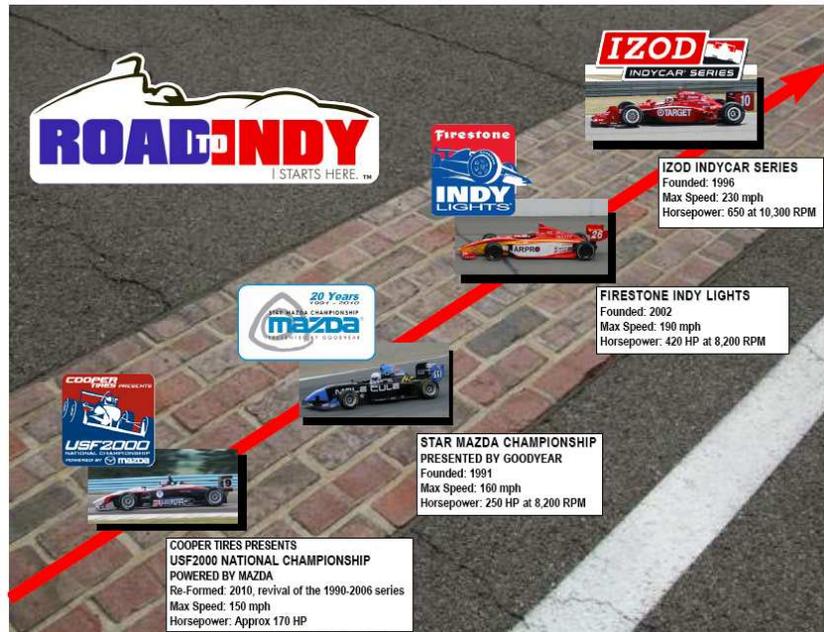
"To top it all off, I am convinced that everybody in our sport wins with this program. The best new talent can build their motorsports careers. Race fans in North America eventually get to see them in Indy cars."

Notable graduates of the Star Mazda Championship already competing in the IZOD IndyCar Series include Marco Andretti, Graham

Rahal and Raphael Matos (the 2005 Star Mazda champion). Additionally, competitors in the Indy Lights series who honed their skills in the Star Mazda Championship include James Davison, James Hinchcliffe, Pablo Donoso, Michael Potekhen and Daniel Herrington.

"The Road to Indy program is the result of a lot of effort by a lot of people over a long time," says Roger Bailey, Executive Director of Firestone Indy Lights. "Our series has had a long relationship with the Star Mazda Championship over the years and a number of the drivers competing with us currently are Star Mazda graduates. The Star Mazda race car is just the right vehicle, with the right horsepower and driving characteristics, to produce drivers ready to hit the ground running in Firestone Indy Lights. Star Mazda has been the unofficial stepping-stone to Indy Lights for many years and to be able to officially recognize that now, along with all the other good things happening for the Indy Racing League, is perfect timing and a big step forward for open-wheel racing."

Drivers in the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear are in the unique position of participating in two complementary programs designed to advance their motorsports careers;



in addition to the IRL's Road to Indy program, the **MAZDASPEED** Motorsports Driver Development Ladder is the only long-term motorsports scholarship backed by a global automaker. Champions at each level from karting to the top ranks of auto racing are provided with a Mazda-sponsored ride in the next step up the ladder:

- The winner of a 'shootout' among top kart racers from several series wins a Mazda-funded season in the BFGoodrich Skip Barber National Presented by Mazda.
- The Skip Barber National champion moves up to race in the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear.
- The Star Mazda Champion graduates to a season of racing in the Cooper Tires Presents the Atlantic Championship Powered by Mazda.

"I'm very happy to see more routes to the top developing for young open-wheel drivers," says John Church, owner of JDC Motorsports, winner of the 2009 Star Mazda Championship with driver Adam Christodoulou. "The Road to Indy is going to be good for everyone involved, from the drivers, teams, series and sponsors to the fans and the sport in general."

The 11-weekend, 13-race 2010 Star Mazda Championship schedule retains its traditional season-opener at the legendary 12 Hours of Sebring on March 19. On the following weekend, March 27, the Mazda Renesis rotary-powered open-wheelers will join the Indy Racing League for the first time ever on track in the Streets of St. Petersburg, followed by Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca on May 22 with ALMS. From there it's a sprint halfway across the country to the heartland of open-wheel racing in North America and an appearance on May 29, along with the USAC Midgets and the new U.S. F2000 series, on the oval at O'Reilly Raceway Park in Indianapolis at the "Night before the 500," where they will also be participating in the Road to Indy Summit during the same weekend.

One high-profile oval race will follow another on the schedule as the teams and drivers of the Star Mazda Championship head for another appearance at an IRL event, this one on the one-mile oval at Iowa Speedway on June 19. The following weekend, June 26 – 27 marks a return to road racing with a Mazda-sponsored double-header at New Jersey Motorsports Park. Next up is the second of two Mazda-sponsored, double-header weekends, this one at the Autobahn Country Club in Joliet, Illinois on July 31 – August 1. Two weeks later, on August 15, drivers will test their skills on the famed street circuit of the GP3R in Trois-Rivières, Quebec. The season wraps up with trio of major ALMS races; Road America on August 21, Mosport on August 28 and Road Atlanta for the 'Petit Le Mans' on October 1.

"I think its fantastic that we've narrowed the field and have all levels of open-wheel racing, from the grass roots to the top, working together," says Keith Willis, team principal at AIM Autosport, the 2008 Star Mazda Champions with John Edwards. "With the fragmentation of the

sport in recent years, and the current economic climate, the joint effort represented by the Road to Indy program is a great step forward."

### **About Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear**

For 2010, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear will feature an 11-weekend, 13-race schedule, most on major race weekends with American Le Mans and the Indy Racing League. Rising stars from around the world will be watched by more than a million fans as they compete for prizes valued at \$1.5 million, including a Mazda-sponsored, full-season drive on the next level of the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder. Drivers 16 and older are welcome to compete and the Star Mazda Championship also features Expert (30 to 44) and Master (45 and older) classes for more mature racers. The Star Mazda Championship features standing starts, wheel-to-wheel racing at 150 mph and budgets a fraction of other top open-wheel ladder series. For more information on the Star Mazda Championship please visit [www.starmazda.com](http://www.starmazda.com)

### **Media Contacts**

Peter Frey / Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear / (818) 398-5733 / [StarMazdaPR@aol.com](mailto:StarMazdaPR@aol.com)

Arni Sribhen / Indy Racing League / (317) 492-8531 / [asribhen@indycar.com](mailto:asribhen@indycar.com)

Linda Mansfield / Cooper Tires Presents the USF2000 National Championship presented by Mazda / (317) 201-0729 / [LindaKMansfield@cs.com](mailto:LindaKMansfield@cs.com)

Jim Altemus / BFGoodrich Skip Barber National / 860-435-1300 / [jaltemus@skipbarber.com](mailto:jaltemus@skipbarber.com)

Dean Case, Dean Case / Communications Officer / MAZDASPEED Motorsports, (310) 318-4582  
[MAZDASPEED@MazdaUSA.com](mailto:MAZDASPEED@MazdaUSA.com)

