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WITH A PAIR ON THE PODIUM AND FIVE IN THE TOP-7, STAR MAZDA GRADUATES SHINE IN THE GRAND PRIX OF ST. PETERSBURG INDY LIGHTS SEASON-OPENER

Grand Prix of St. Petersburg (March 28, 2011) – Demonstrating dramatically that the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear is the ideal development series for rising open-wheel stars to



accelerate their careers on the Mazda Road to Indy, graduates of the Star Mazda class of 2009-2010 took two of the three podium spots – and five of the top-7 finishing positions – in the 2011 Indy Lights season-opener at the Grand Prix of St. Petersburg.

2010 Star Mazda champion Conor Daly (left), beaten for the pole in his first-ever Indy Lights start by 1/100th of a second, started from the front row and finished 2nd in the #77 Sam Schmidt Motorsports / Mazda Road to Indy / Mockett car.

"It's great to race here again and a good day for Sam Schmidt Motorsports," said Daly. "We had really fast race cars and were running 1-2-3 until that restart. Unfortunately on that initial start I was just in the wrong gear. It was my mistake, and next time I will be able to learn from it. It was unfortunate for us there, but it is also good to know that we can make passes happen in this car. It was a valuable experience for me if I ever have to get into a dog fight situation again. The last restart was epic and Esteban went straight down the inside and he saw I was coming and he was trying to make a move on Josef as well. I could tell that it was basically an ice rink on the inside of the track as there was dust flying everywhere. Josef and I haven't raced together since 2008 and we always seem to end up together on the podium as 1-2 one way or another. It was a great day for the entire Mazda Road to Indy Team."

Moving up from 5th on the starting grid to finish 3rd in the #36 Pulse/O2 Racing car was 2008-2009 Star Mazda standout Peter Dempsey (right). Nicknamed 'the Irish Steamroller' for his remarkable winning streaks (four victories in 2008 and five in 2009); Dempsey led the race for 11 laps.

"I got a fantastic start, it was a first-ever roll-in start, I thought once I get inside hopefully these top three cars would run a bit fast and try to chase each other and they did," said Dempsey, three-time winner of the prestigious Walter Hayes trophy. "I led for the first 10-15 laps and the tires let off a little bit. I knew in the restart I had a chance for the podium if they [the team] fought and they did



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fight quite hard and they got a podium out of it. I want to thank the guys of the number 36 Pulse car for giving me the opportunity to do it and O2 Racing. I think it's probably their first podium at Indy Lights - at their first real race. It's a great start for the season and hopefully it leads on to a few more podiums. I only had two test days in the car. I was aiming for the top five but to come out with a podium is just...I couldn't ask for anything more.

Rounding out the top-5 were Canadian driver David Ostella, who advanced seven positions, from 11th on the grid, to finish fourth in the No. 16 Global Precast Team Jensen entry, Norwegian driver Anders 'The Viking' Krohn, who moved up two positions to finish sixth in the No. 9 Liberty Engineering Special for Belardi Auto Racing and Peter Dempsey's O2 Racing teammate, Quebec racer Mikael Grenier.



"I feel incredible, my first race ever in Firestone Indy Lights and I can't say how great this was," said Ostella. "It was the first time with the rolling start and I did pretty good. I was a little nervous, but I just jumped up from I don't know where to the top five. It was awesome."

"It was a hectic race to say the least; a lot of bumping on the restart," observed Krohn. "Today was all about capitalizing on the mistakes of others. Top five in Belardi's first-ever Firestone Indy Lights race is not bad."

Joel Miller, the 2007 Skip Barber Pro Series champion, moved up to the Star Mazda Championship in 2008 via the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder and won from the pole in his first-ever Star Mazda race in 2008; he finished second in the championship that year. At St. Pete, he qualified 9th in the #17 Team E car, but finished 13th due to contact on lap 40.

Ostella scored one podium and thirteen top-10 finishes in two seasons (2009-2010) of Star Mazda competition. Krohn also ran two seasons, winning on the Milwaukee oval in 2009 and finishing 2nd in the 2010 championship with a remarkable record of one pole, six podium finishes and a top-5 in every race of the season. Grenier ran a partial season in 2009, scoring two podium finishes; in a full-season effort in 2010, he finished 8th in the championship with one win, two poles and six top-5 finishes.

Venezuelan racer Jorge Goncalvez ran two full seasons in the Star Mazda Championship, 2009-2010, finishing 4th in the championship last season with a record of one win and five podium finishes. He finished 11th in the St. Pete Indy Lights race



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It's also interesting to note that two of the top teams in the Firestone Indy Lights series are composed entirely of Star Mazda graduates; O2 with Dempsey and Grenier and Belardi with Krohn and Goncalvez.

About Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear

For 2011, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear will be a major part of the Mazda



Road to Indy and will feature a 10-weekend, 11-race schedule, all on major race weekends and most with IndyCar. Two weekends are with the American Le Mans series, and one is a double-header with Indy Lights. 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 scholarship to move up and race in the 2012 Firestone Indy Lights series. Drivers 16 and older are welcome

to compete and the Star Mazda Championship also features the Expert Series for drivers 30 and older. The Star Mazda Championship features standing starts, wheel-to-wheel racing at 160 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.

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, please contact Star Mazda Communications Director Peter Frey at (818) 398-5733 or StarMazdaPR@aol.com.

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