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STAR MAZDA'S 'GATEWAY GRADUATES' – 1999 CHAMPION JOEY HAND NOW FACTORY DRIVER IN DTM, 2009 MASTER SERIES CHAMPION MIKE GUASCH FINISHES 4TH AT LONG BEACH IN ALMS PROTOTYPE

The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear has always occupied a unique place in the motorsports world, a top open-wheel driver development series that not only graduates drivers straight to the top of formula racing worldwide (Scott Speed in F1; Marco Andretti, Graham Rahal and James Hinchcliffe in IndyCar), but also to many other series (2004 champ Michael McDowell to NASCAR, 2007 champion Dane Cameron and 2008 champion John Edwards to Grand-Am, etc.).

The latest two making a splash include 1999 Star Mazda Champion Joey Hand, who went on to race a wide variety of prototypes and sports cars – including an overall victory in the 2011 Rolex 24 at Daytona co-driving for Team Ganassi with Scott Pruett, Memo Rojas and Graham Rahal – and is now a factory driver in the high-tech DTM series. There is a story in the current issue of Road &Track in which he is featured (see quote below); to read the story, click [here](#).

Road & Track:

Some have called it “NASCAR with a German accent,” but Joey Hand thinks the Deutsche Tourenwagen Masters (DTM) is more than that: “These cars are the highest level of GT racing in the world,” says the 32-



year-old Californian, who likens DTM sedans to the single-seaters he raced successfully in Star Mazda and Toyota Atlantics...

.... As the only U.S. driver on the six-man DTM team, Hand wants to show the world that American drivers can beat the Europeans at their own game. He believes that his extensive North American racing experience will pay off in the series’ 80-minute races, which are punctuated by two mandatory pitstops. “Because there are no co-drivers, once you get your car set up, you’ve got what you’ve got.”

In addition to competing in all 11 DTM races, Hand will also race in seven ALMS events. That will earn him a lot of frequent flyer miles, but it won’t faze him. “I’m very much a racer,” he says. “I love to race.”



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Star Mazda's other news-making success story comes in the form of 2009 Master Series champion Mike Guasch, now co-driving with IndyCar/prototype veteran Memo Gidley in the #5 Muscle Milk/Molecule Oreca FLM09. Guasch placed first overall in the Masters Class for drivers 45 and older in the 2009 Star Mazda Championship. Guasch has since tested his skills in the FIA GT3 European Championship (2010) as well as the British GT Championship (2011) in addition to his limited schedule in the ALMS.

At last weekend's Round 2 of the 2012 American Le Mans Series, the Muscle Milk team not only won the race overall with drivers Klaus Graf and Lucas Luhr, but also scored its first double podium finish in the American Le Mans Series with an impressive second place by Memo Gidley and Mike Guasch in the PC class... and 4th overall. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Prior to the race, Mike Guasch said: "This will be my first race at Long Beach, and I'm looking forward to it. I'm excited! I enjoyed the couple of street races that I did in Star Mazda at Houston and Trois-Rivières in



the past. I like that type of slow technical track and I performed well on them....

... "I've been preparing by learning the track on my simulator. There isn't a lot of practice time at Long Beach, so preparation becomes that much more important going into the race weekend. Of course, nothing really prepares for the actual feel of the track like being on track, but the more I can learn ahead of time, the better. Fortunately, Memo has been to Long Beach and he knows it

very well, so that will definitely help."

After the race: "I think we had a great race. I'm a little bit disappointed because we were close to a win but finishing on the podium is a great result for the Muscle Milk / Molecule car. The start seemed like a bit of a mess, but I was able to gain a couple of spots going into the first turn. Honestly, it seemed like a lot of people were out of sorts but I felt really solid and I was able to take advantage of that. It gives me more confidence for the rest of the season and I know I have the pace to race with the rest of these guys and that's a good thing."

About Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear

For 2012, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear is a major part of the [Mazda Road to Indy](#) with a 2012 schedule that includes 17 races on 10 weekends, most with IndyCar. Rising stars from around the world will compete on road courses, street circuits and ovals in front of more than a million



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fans as they compete for prizes valued at \$1.5 million, including a scholarship to move up and race in the 2013 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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