

Andersen Racing's Jaeger Earns Pole
For 2006 Star Mazda Season Opener
And Sets a New Track Record to Boot

SEBRING, Fla., March 16 - In his first Star Mazda event with Andersen Racing, Cincinnati's Brad Jaeger set a new track record and earned the pole for Friday's season opener in preliminary action Thursday at Sebring International Raceway here.

The Vanderbilt University engineering student won the pole in the Andersen Racing No. 2 with a lap in 2:01.002 for an average speed of 110.081 miles per hour at the 3.7-mile road course. That was 0.087 of a second faster than the driver who will start second, Ryan Justice. Since official track records can only be set during qualifying or a race, Jaeger's time beat Dan Dileo's two-year-old mark of 2:02.022 to rewrite the record book too.

Gerardo Bonilla of Orlando, Fla. regrouped from a blown engine in the morning practice session to qualify fifth in the Andersen Racing No. 9, which also carries the colors of the Skip Barber Racing School, Century Packing Corp. and Carmela Sausages. Ramiro Scuncio of Concepcion, Chile improved steadily and will start 13th in tomorrow afternoon's 45-minute race in the Andersen Racing No. 22, which is sponsored by Sky Airlinc and DuFour Ultra Pura. The Fairfield, N.J.-based team's fourth driver, Charlie Hollings of Yorkshire, England, was involved in an accident during qualifying and will start from the rear of the 37-car field tomorrow in the Andersen Racing/Hollings Pet Foods No. 4. The car only received right-rear suspension damage and a damaged right-front wing, and team manager Richard Morgan was already busy fixing it before the post-qualifying interviews were completed. Hollings was also regrouping from a blown engine earlier in the week.

The field was split into two groups by practice times for the 45-minute qualifying session. The slower group went first and had no delays until the very end, when one car spun. The faster group then went out but trouble erupted immediately when there were a couple accidents and spins. That cut the session very short, and resulted in the drivers in that session only having two or three laps at speed to record their times. Some of them, including Jaeger, Bonilla and Hollings, were faced with no visibility at all at one point or the other due to white smoke from various cars braking around them. More information on that can be found in their post-qualifying quotes.

Andersen Racing's Web site is at andersenracingteam.com and the series' Web site is at starmazda.com.

Tomorrow's race is slated to start at 3:05 p.m. It will be televised on SPEED on a tape-delayed basis on Sunday, April 9 at 4 p.m. Eastern time.

Post-qualifying quotes follow:

Brad Jaeger: "I'm surprised that a 2:01 got the pole. On the first lap someone spun, and my fastest lap was the next one. One the very last lap I had a few mistakes.

"I was really surprised that I had the pole, but it's a wonderful way to start the season. The only thing better would be to win tomorrow.

"I was bedding in my brakes on my first lap. I wanted to get a good run

going, but then someone spun in front of me in turn one. He locked up his brakes and slid right off. There was white smoke everywhere; you couldn't see a thing.

"The track was so greasy and with the red flags, everybody was really trying to push it.

"Our Goodyear tires were good. The 250 compound has so much grip that you can go out and do a lot right away. We only had a couple of laps but the Goodyear tires allowed me to put forth a great effort and allow us to get the pole.

"We wouldn't be here without the Andersen Racing team putting forth a great effort. It was a great performance by the Andersen Racing team all week. They worked long and hard to get the car where it is right now. Right now the car is good, but we have a few things that we're going to try to sort out before the race tomorrow. I think we will have a really good car tomorrow. But getting the pole in our first race together says a lot about this team and the chemistry we have under the tent.

"The race is going to be exciting, especially the start. I think Justice and I are up front and then there are some cars from the second session, and then more cars from the first session."

Gerardo Bonilla: "I feel like I'm on cloud nine. I can't think of a better way to start the season after the adversity the crew overcame today. We had a blown engine in the practice before qualifying, and the team worked really hard to change the engine in time for qualifying. They finished three minutes before the session started, and I was able to get in line.

"Then when the session started there was a car in the wall in turn three right away, and we came in and I was able to rejoin the field with my team and get in line. Then somebody spun in turn one and there was white smoke everywhere as everybody locked up trying to miss him. We kept going and did our two laps, but there was so much dirt on the track that it was one flyer essentially to do the time and get fifth.

"The thanks go to the guys that changed the engine. They only had about three hours but they got it done. Andersen Racing is the best team here; there is none better. The guys just swarmed over the car to do what had to be done and get me out there for the session."

Ramiro Scuncio: "We're making progress. Qualifying was very good; we put it together when it counted. When you look at the pole and where we are, this is by far the closest we've been since we got here. We started being 4 seconds behind and now we're only 1.4 seconds behind. Thirteenth out of 37 cars in your first race isn't bad. We're making progress, and we haven't had any spins or accidents, which is good. We're making improvements every session, which is what we want to do."

Charlie Hollings: "I went through turn one and I was probably pushing it a bit, and a car in front of me got off and kicked up a big cloud of dirt. I just ran a bit wide on the exit, bounced off the curb and went through the grass, and I didn't get even one timed lap in, so I'm going to have to come from the rear tomorrow. It was just bad luck, really. Oh well; the race will be better tomorrow. I'll get plenty of overtaking practice tomorrow, hopefully. We'll be O.K."

The preliminary sessions' times follow:

Tuesday, First Test Session

1. Mike Potekhen, 2:01.355
2. Brad Jaeger, 2:01.506
8. Gerardo Bonilla, 2:01.906
20. Charlie Hollings, 2:05.523
21. Ramiro Scuncio, 2:05.712

Tuesday, Second Test Session

1. Ryan Justice, 2:01.441
3. Gerardo Bonilla, 2:02.631
6. Brad Jaeger, 2:02.968
18. Charlie Hollings, 2:05.711
19. Ramiro Scuncio, 2:05.753

Tuesday, Third Test Session

1. Adrian Carrio, 1:59.325
 6. Brad Jaeger, 2:01.143
 9. Gerardo Bonilla, 2:01.706
 17. Ramiro Scuncio, 2:02.620
- No time: Charlie Hollings

Wednesday, First Practice Session, 8 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

1. Ryan Justice, 1:58.304 (112.591 mph)
7. Gerardo Bonilla, 1:59.537 (111.430 mph)
8. Charlie Hollings, 1:59.726 (111.254 mph)
14. Brad Jaeger, 2:00.215 (110.801 mph)
27. Ramiro Scuncio, 2:01.858 (109.308 mph)

Wednesday, Second Practice Session, 1:20 p.m. to 1:50 p.m.

1. Ryan Justice, 1:59.216 (111.730 mph)
4. Brad Jaeger, 1:59.790 (111.195 mph)
17. Gerardo Bonilla, 2:01.708 (109.442 mph)
19. Charles Hollings, 2:01.887 (109.282 mph)
28. Ramiro Scuncio, 2:03.893 (107.512 mph)

Thursday Practice Session, 8:40 a.m. to 9:10 a.m.

1. Ryan Justice, 1:58.965 (111.966 mph)
4. Brad Jaeger, 1:59.423 (111.536 mph)
9. Charlie Hollings, 1:59.946 (111.050 mph)
10. Gerardo Bonilla, 2:00.073, (110.933 mph)
22. Ramiro Scuncio, 2:01.521, (109.611 mph)

Thursday Qualifying, 12:45 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

1. Brad Jaeger, 2:01.002, 110.081 mph
5. Gerardo Bonilla, 2:01.521, 109.611 mph
13. Ramiro Scuncio, 2:02.419, 108.807 mph
36. Charlie Hollings, 8:44,430, 5.730 mph.