

For Immediate Release

Rob Bunker made the best of a difficult start to his race season. The Bridgewater, N.J., teen recovered from a steering column failure during qualifying for his first Star Mazda Championship race, then charged from 35th to ninth during the 46-minute sprint race.

Although Bunker is a series rookie, he adapted quickly to the 3.7-mile Sebring (Fla.) International Raceway road course, lapping in the top 10 during three days of testing and practice. He had a clear track for the start of his qualifying run, but the steering failure zapped him off track at the first turn. He saved the car and started to plot his race strategy.

"We had at least two hours of serious debating about what we were going to do," he reported. "I did mental imagery, constantly thinking about what would happen, thinking about everything three or four times through, every possible scenario for the start. I dreamt about it! I also did a drill where I closed my eyes, imagined cars just flying at me, dodging them. It surprisingly helped a lot."

Bunker gained seven positions on the first lap of 17, and continued to add to the total. With several full-course cautions during the race, he carved through the field, taking four or five positions on each restart. He finished ninth to earn valuable championship points.

"The pace in the back was slower than I thought, but it made everything easier. I could literally drive by four cars per lap. The goal was two cars per lap and we would win – it's math," he explained. "We had one too many yellow [caution] flags. If one of them hadn't happened, we could have had fifth [place]. But it was a flawless performance. By the end of the run, the last six minutes, we were the fastest car on track. I couldn't have asked for more."

Bunker's next race is scheduled for May 14 in Houston.

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