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Contact: Pete Mercier (702) 499-6724

Phenom drivers survive first lap scare to finish towards front at Montreal

June 26, 2006. Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Phenom Racing Group drivers John Faulkner, Michael Guasch and Mark Pavan narrowly escaped from a frightening first lap incident that claimed fifteen of their competitors to spend the rest of the race battling each other to finish tenth, eleventh and twelfth respectively in Round Five of the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear, held this weekend at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve in Montreal this weekend as part of the Formula One Grand Prix of Canada activities.

“There were a lot of cars torn up at the start of the race and we were very fortunate that our drivers came through relatively unscathed to race each other to the checkered flag,” Phenom Racing Group Team Manager Pete Mercier explained. “This weekend marked the best finish for this new team and I’m proud of all the drivers and crew for all their efforts.”

The trouble started on the opening lap as Daniel Herrington and Michael Potekhen, running first and third in the championship respectively, made contact as they drove through the high-speed sweeper entering the backstraight, triggering a chain reaction accident that blocked the circuit as drivers swerved to avoid the spinning cars. “I came up on the blind corner flat out and all I could see was smoke and waving yellow flags,” Faulkner, driving the #93 Molecule/Canaccord Adams Phenom Racing Group Mazda, described. “I hit my brakes as hard as I could and flat spotted my right front tire but was able to find a way through the accident.”

Faulkner threaded the needle, taking to the grass at one point, to emerge clear of the accident while Pavan locked up his brakes and narrowly missed disaster himself. “When I came around the corner and saw everything happening I locked everything up and spun sideways across the track, finishing the job of blocking the track,” Pavan revealed. “At that point I was just hoping I wouldn’t get hit.”

All three drivers were eventually able to make their way back to the pit lane during the red flag period and were able to take the green flag for the restart and race each other during the subsequent 20-minute timed race. “Once we got started again Mark was faster than I was so I let him by but he was a little bit too aggressive entering the hairpin and I was able to get back by him,” Faulkner said. “For the rest of the race my strategy was to run as strong as I could, considering the shape of my car, and I was able to get the top ten finish.”

Faulkner was able to open a bit a gap on his teammates as Pavan and Guasch were fighting for position. “It was a blast racing with Mark once the things got back underway,” Guasch said. “We were going back and forth, I was able to get around him when he overshot the chicane then he would close up on me and he made another move but overshot the chicane again and I think we crossed the finish line less than a car length apart. “

The team now heads back west to prepare for round six of the championship to be held at the recently opened Miller Motorsports Park in Salt Lake City, Utah on July 13-15. Round five of the championship will be featured on Speed Channel on Sunday, July 9th at 1:00 PM Eastern Time.

About Phenom Racing Group

Founded by Star Mazda Championship competitor Michael Guasch and veteran Formula Atlantic, American LeMans Series and Star Mazda engineer Pete Mercier, Phenom Racing Group is headquartered in Benicia, California and will compete in the 2006 Russell Racing Pro Formula Mazda Championship as well as the nationally televised Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear. More information about the team can be found on their website at www.phenomracinggroup.com.