

Miller Motorsports Park race

Rob Bunker honed his practiced charge, racing from 15th to finish fourth in the Star Mazda Championship race at Miller Motorsports Park in Tooele, Utah, on July 15. The Bridgewater, N.J., driver gained 11 positions in just five laps of green-flag racing.

Bunker's qualifying run in the No. 18 AIM Autosport Pro Formula Mazda was hampered by a mechanical problem, but he quickly overcame it, moving up eight positions in the first two laps of the 45-minute, 13-lap race. He steadily notched three more spots to finish fourth.

"I told everybody on the team, 'Watch, by the first lap, I'll be in 10th.' Sure enough, first lap, sitting pretty in 10th place. We just kept dropping them down, lap by lap, picking them off," he said. "I've always done spectacular starts, but I kept pushing. I kept myself out of trouble, never let up and I brought the car all the way to the top five. It was a lot of fun."

Bunker posted consistently faster laps as the race progressed. His last lap was his best – and third-fastest of the 32-car field – at two minutes 41.935 seconds on the 4.486-mile road course.

"We were flying! Everything came together. I saved the tires during the yellow flag [caution period], warmed them up real easy, kept the engine temperatures way down and just pushed as hard as I could," he explained.

driver plus

Bunker spent a week in Utah prior to the race. The week gave him test time on the new track, a chance to acclimate to the 4450-foot elevation and extra team time: "I got to work with the team, show them that I do more than just drive!"

Portland preview

Bunker's focus now shifts to the Star Mazda race at Portland International Raceway on July 22. He hopes to carry the momentum of his Utah finish to the Oregon track.

"We're coming off on a good note; I think the season is maybe going in our favor a bit. As long as we can qualify a little better, we showed everybody that we can hang up front, no problem. The dynamics of the tracks are pretty similar, so we just need to keep our head in the game and it shouldn't be too much difficulty to go from one track to the other. Plus, we'll be excited all week long," he said.