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Andersen Racing's Vassmer and Goring Post Top-10 Finishes For Andersen Racing in Star Mazda Season Opener at Sebring

SEBRING, Fla., March 16 — Ricardo Vassmer and Jonathan Goring finished seventh and tenth, respectively, to lead the Andersen Racing contingent in a short and wet season opener for the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear Friday at Sebring International Raceway.

All five Andersen Racing cars finished the race, which started 77 minutes late due to heavy rain and consisted of about three green-flag laps due to more rain and one big crash. There were about 5 minutes of green-flag racing for what was originally scheduled to be a 45-minute race.

Luckily none of the Andersen cars were involved in the crash, and when the checkered flew with eight laps down all five cars fielded by the Fairfield, N.J.-based team were able to take the checkered. Following Vassmer and Goring were Phil Saville in 14th; Michael Fitzgerald in 21st and Jonny Baker in 23rd place out of the 32 entries.

The first two laps were run under a full-course yellow. When the green did fly Gerry Kraut, Dan Weyland and John Strickler crashed on the frontstretch to bring out the yellow again. Dan DiLeo passed Vassmer for fourth before that occurred, however, and Goring had already moved up one spot from 14th to 13th.

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The green waved again with six laps down. There was some jockeying for position at the front at the end, but unfortunately Vassmer went from fifth to seventh on the last lap when he ran over a big puddle and did a 360-degree spin.

Goring drove a smart race. Despite the adverse conditions he stayed out of trouble and was rewarded by advancing four positions from his starting spot for his efforts.

James Davison got his photo taken on the top step of the podium but he was later penalized two positions for passing under a yellow flag. That gave the victory to Marco DiLeo with his brother, Dan, in second place. Davison was placed in third. Polesitter Dane Cameron ended up fourth. Lorenzo Mandarin, Cole Morgan, Vassmer, Charles Anti, Nick Haye and Goring rounded out the top 10 on the provisional race results sheet.

Andersen Racing's Web site is at andersenracingteam.com. The series' Web site is at starmazda.com. The race will be televised on SPEED on a date that will be announced on the latter.

The next Star Mazda races are April 22 in Houston, Texas and April 28 in Alton, Va.

Quotes follow:

Ricardo Vassmer (Caracas, Venezuela; sponsors include PDVSA, Zoom, Meridiano Television and Citgo): "It was a weird race. I think I had the fastest car, but I couldn't see anything, especially in Turn 1 and 17.

"This was only my second race in the wet.

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"I was doing well until the last lap. I had a good run coming out of 16 and I was holding off the guys behind me, but then I ran through a big puddle. When I hit the brakes, I did a 360-spin under the bridge, and that's how Lorenzo Mandarin and Cole Morgan got by me and I went from fifth to seventh.

Jonathan Goring (Norfolk, Conn.; sponsors include the Skip Barber Racing School, Alfas Unlimited and NPA Graphics): "I'm pretty happy with a top-10 for my first Star Mazda race. I think I drove a smart race. I didn't want to start the season with a DNF. Consistency wins championships.

"The visibility wasn't as horrible as I've experienced, but pretty close to it. The car was great; I'm looking forward to the next race."

Phil Saville (Oak Brook, Ill.; sponsors include New York Jewelers of Chicago, NVG Residential, Mac Marketing & Advertising Corp. and Chicago Indoor Racing): "The car was good. The team did a nice job on the set-up; the car was excellent in the rain.

"The race was way too short; there weren't enough green laps. There wasn't much time to act.

"The visibility was really bad. I wasn't close to the big crash. I did go off once in Turn 13 and watched about five cars go by me. That wasn't good. I went through the water and grass and got back on the track.

"On the second green-flag lap a piece flew off my car too; it was the cover that goes over the front suspension. That was interesting.

"I'm going to do the VIR race; I'm looking forward to that."

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Michael Fitzgerald (Newtown Square, Pa.; sponsors include Blaser Swissslube, Star CNC Machine Tools, LNS America, Lynex, Penske Racing Shocks and Fitze Engineers): “I had a lot of fun. I’ve raced in the rain before, but not in conditions like that. There’s a painted white stripe on the frontstretch, and when you crossed it you automatically got wheel spin.

“I couldn’t see anything when I came upon the wreck, and I hit a nose box that was in the middle of the track. It didn’t really hurt me though because we weren’t going that fast. It’s a shame that they flew the checkered so early; I was having fun.

“The team is great. You can’t go wrong with Andersen Racing!”

Jonny Baker (Farnham Common, Buckinghamshire, England): “I’m going to forget this week; I’m very disappointed. For the straight to be the most dangerous part of the track says a lot.

“I have some positives to take out of the week though. I ran some fast laps in practice. I mostly kept out of trouble. I’m just a bit rusty.

“I spun around once in the race but I didn’t hit anything. I just need more laps in this kind of car. The VIR test we have coming up will be a big blast.”