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### **Northwest Autosport enters season confident after final pre-season test**

March 5, 2007. Portland, Oregon. With the opening round of the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear just a week away Northwest Autosport is excited at their prospects following a successful two day test at Buttonwillow Raceway Park that saw their young drivers Eric Freiberg and Lorenzo Mandarino, along with veterans Phil Fogg Jr. and Steve Cook, complete over 300 miles of testing and development.

"Entering this season with two rookies everyone at Northwest Autosport is looking forward to the start of the season based on their performances in testing," Team Manager Michael Hernandez explained. "This was Lorenzo's first time in the Pro Formula Mazda and only the second time that Eric had driven the car yet both drivers adjusted to the car and were up to speed quickly, posting the fastest times of the test. Given their raw talent and speed we were equally impressed with their ability to adapt to the changing conditions and their level of technical feedback and look forward to watching them at Sebring battling at the front of the field."

With cold mornings and occasional showers during the test, the changing conditions were ideal for showing the drivers how the Pro Formula Mazda handles in different situations and both drivers adjusted quickly, setting fast laps in all sessions. "In addition to bringing the drivers up to speed we really wanted to help them understand the window the car likes to operate in and the weather played right into our hands," commented team driving coach Ryan Justice, a Northwest Autosport alumni and current Indy Pro Series driver. "Lorenzo and Eric did a great job and were very impressive for their amount of experience. I have little doubt that both of these drivers will be at the front of the field."

Freiberg and Mandarino were equally enthused by the test. "We had a great couple of days during the test and am looking forward to the start of the season," commented the Homer Glen, Illinois native Freiberg. "I got the chance to feel the changes between the different tire compounds and log a lot of miles working with the team and my engineer. Now all I can think about is Sebring and what looks to be a great season."

Mandarino, runner-up in the Discovery Channel Canada Star Racer driver search competition, echoed Freiberg's thoughts. "For my first time in the car I was very pleased with my progression and getting up to speed and the team did a great job," the Vancouver, Canada explained. "The car is really fast in some sections and I'm happy to be racing in the series. Now that I have some laps behind the wheel of this car I am excited about going to Sebring as I have some experience on that track from Skip Barber so it should be a fun weekend."

The test was also a cause for celebration as veteran Northwest Autosport driver Steve Cook returned to the cockpit for the first time since July of 2005. It has been a long road back to the track for Cook, a professor in the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Tulane Medical School in New Orleans, who lost everything when Hurricane Katrina swept through Louisiana and Mississippi in August of that year. Battling back from this tragedy and unexpected health issues, Cook was able to complete the two day test in preparations for participating in the 2007 championships.

Based in Milwaukie, Oregon, Northwest Autosport is one of the top teams participating in the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear, which will feature twelve races across the United States and Canada supporting the American Le Mans Series, ChampCar and the GrandAm series. For more information please visit [www.northwestautosport.com](http://www.northwestautosport.com).

