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Team USA Scholarship Winners Test Andersen Racing Star Mazda Cars at VIR

FAIRFIELD, N.J., Oct. 15 — Team USA scholarship winners Patrick Barrett and Joel Miller should be a little more prepared to tackle the Formula Palmer Audis they'll drive in Europe later this fall after successfully completing tests in Andersen Racing Star Mazda cars at VIRginia International Raceway (VIR) last week.

Barrett logged 71 laps and Miller completed 74 laps at the road course in Alton, Va.

Barrett, 18, of Los Osos, Calif., is the 2007 Pacific F2000 champion. Miller, 19, of Hesperia, Calif., clinched the BFGoodrich/Skip Barber National presented by Mazda earlier this month at VIR.

The scholarship winners are slated to compete at Brands Hatch, England on Oct. 27-28 and at Snetterton, England Nov. 3-4 in the six-race Formula Palmer Audi Autumn Trophy competition.

Andersen Racing team owner Dan Andersen was impressed with how both teens adapted to his Star Mazda cars. "I think both boys recognize that the effort required to drive a Star Mazda car, with its bias-ply Goodyear tires, is more than they are used to," he said.

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"One of my engineers commented prior to the start of actual testing that they were both clearly mature, polite, even tempered and poised, but he wondered aloud if they were going to be fast. At the end of the test we both agreed they were that too!" Andersen said. "My compliments to the Team USA selection committee, as they have chosen candidates who have the speed as well as all of the other important attributes they'll need to advance in the sport."

Andersen added that both young men adapted well when the team's engineers made spring and damper changes. "They underwent a full test-day program, with data analysis sessions, video camera reviews with the engineers and the like," he added.

"All of us at Team USA want to thank Dan Andersen and everyone else at Andersen Racing for their help, as well as Gary Rodrigues of the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear," said auto racing writer/broadcaster Jeremy Shaw, the scholarship's founder and president.

Andersen and Shaw indicated that they intend to work together to provide tests for future Team USA scholarship winners too.

"I had a fantastic time working with everyone at Andersen Racing," said Barrett. "The knowledge I learned from this test has greatly helped me prepare myself for the FPA Autumn Trophy this fall. I really want to thank everyone involved with the Team USA scholarship program for all of their support and for giving me this great opportunity."

"It was the first test I've ever done in a Star Mazda car, so a lot of it was just learning the car," Miller said of the test. "Working with [engineer] Mike Reggio was a good experience. We had a shock problem but we worked hard and overcame that, which showed that we could work through problems. I think it was really good preparation for the Formula Palmer Audis we'll drive in England. It gave us some good track time that Jeremy Shaw really wanted us to have."

Although the test was private, SPEED TV was on hand to tape the activities for future airing.

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Eighteen-year-old Ricky Taylor of Altamonte Springs, Fla., who finished second to Miller in the 2007 Skip Barber National championship, was also on hand at VIR and was impressive when he tested both a Formula 2000 and a Star Mazda car with the team. The 2005 and 2006 Skip Barber National champions, Gerardo Bonilla and Jonathan Goring, both went on to become members of Andersen Racing.

“The Skip Barber series is very well run and is definitely a good program for entry-level drivers,” Andersen said.

Current Andersen Racing drivers Jonny Baker, Ricardo Vassmer and Yannick Hofman also tested various cars at VIR last week. Baker tested his Star Mazda car, shook down a brand-new F2000 car, and tested the F2000 car that Taylor drove earlier. Vassmer concentrated on his F2000 car, while Hofman did the same with his Star Mazda car.

Andersen Racing offers a comprehensive, three-tiered ladder system to give rising stars like these one cohesive home and the proper training they’ll need to reach open-wheel racing’s major leagues. The Fairfield, N.J.-based team field multiple entries in the Hankook Tires F2000 Championship, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear and the Indy Pro Series in order to achieve these goals. It is the official Indy Pro Series development team of top IndyCar team Rahal Letterman Racing.

Andersen Racing’s Star Mazda team now heads to Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in Monterey, Calif., for the Star Mazda season finale Oct. 18-20.

More information on the team can be found at andersenracingteam.com. More information on the Team USA scholarship can be found at teamusascholarship.org.