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Gonzalez Signs with Andersen Racing For 2008 Star Mazda Series

PALMETTO, Fla., Dec. 18 — Andersen Racing is pleased to announce that it has signed Juliana Gonzalez to compete in the 2008 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear.

Gonzalez will be a rookie in the 12-race series, which is carried on a tape-delayed basis on SPEED.

The 16-year-old driver from Mexico City, a native of Columbia, competed in six of 12 U.S. F2000 Championship Series races with Andersen Racing this year. Her best showing in that series came in Round 4 at Road Atlanta in May, where she started and finished second. She took the checkered flag just 1.572 seconds behind eventual champion Cole Morgan in that race.

“Our signing of Juliana comes after her very successful Star Mazda test at VIR last month,” said team co-owner Dan Andersen, speaking of a two-day test at VIRginia International Raceway Nov. 15-16 where Gonzalez posted the fastest lap of any driver the team has tested there recently. “We have very high hopes for her in the 2008 Star Mazda championship.”

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"I'm very excited to be with Andersen Racing again for the 2008 season," Gonzalez said. "I feel really happy to have the chance to work with this top team. Having Mike Reggio as engineer is going to be interesting, because we had really good communication during the test and we were able to get up to speed fast. I'm sure we will be a great engineer-driver duo.

"I feel comfortable in advancing to the Star Mazda series next year," she said. "I know we have to work hard and learn, but I know we have the tools to fight at the front of the grid."□

"I want to thank Dan and [team manager] Michelle [Kish] and all the team members for their support and the opportunity to start a new season with an excellent team and great people around me," Gonzalez added. □"I look forward to testing and getting ready for the first race at Sebring."□

The Star Mazda season opener is March 14 at Sebring International Raceway in Sebring, Fla. It is a support event for the Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring American Le Mans Series (ALMS) race.

By advancing from F2000 to Star Mazda, Gonzalez is the latest driver who is successfully moving through open-wheel racing's ranks via Andersen Racing's comprehensive three-step ladder system utilizing the F2000, Star Mazda and Indy Pro series. Its lead Indy Pro driver, Andrew Prendeville, finished second in the F2000 series just three years ago in one of the team's cars.

Andersen Racing is the official development team of IndyCar team Rahal Letterman Racing (RLR).

Andersen Racing will test its Star Mazda and F2000 cars at Sebring Jan. 7-8 and its Indy Pro Series cars there Jan. 24-25.

For more information on Andersen Racing and its test track, Andersen RacePark, see andersenracingteam.com and andersenracepark.com. The complete 2008 Star Mazda schedule can be found at starmazda.com.