



Karting Star Jessica Brannam signs letter of intent to compete with Stars & Stripes Motorsports in the 2009 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear



Tulsa, Oklahoma / Oct. 10 - Stars & Stripes Motorsports announced today it has signed a 'letter of intent' to field a car for 17 year-old karting champion Jessica Brannam in the 2009 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear. Brannam, who began competing at age 9, has won 38 karting championships, 19 undefeated season championships and 196 race victories. She is a six-time honoree of the Lyn St James "Women in the Winner's Circle Foundation," a Skip Barber Karting Scholarship finalist and two-time Red Bull driver search semifinalist. She has also successfully tested and competed in several types of open-wheel racing cars.

"I might be small, but I can haul," says the 5-ft. 5-in., 95-pound, 17 year-old student from McHenry, Illinois, nicknamed 'Banzai Brannam' by fellow competitors. "My lifelong goal is to become a champion in a major racing series and racing the 2009 Star Mazda Championship with Stars & Stripes Motorsports is a major step toward that goal. I've seen all the races on TV and I've practically worn out my iRacing.com membership racing on every track in a virtual Star Mazda car. Now it's time for the real thing."

The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear is now in its 18th year as one of the most prolific, successful and richest open-wheel driver development series in North America. The Star Mazda Championship the college basketball, the triple-A baseball, the Junior A hockey of auto racing, a high-speed training ground for future stars of the sport and a major step on the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Development Ladder that reaches all the way from karting to the Atlantic series

And Brannam has some influential insiders who count themselves as supporters of her move up to the Star Mazda Championship, including 24 Hours of Le Mans-winning driver Price Cobb. "With the right company backing her, she will be a remarkable success story," says Cobb. "Somebody is going to hit the ball out of the park with her. That's who I think she is, and I don't say that lightly."

Vicki O'Connor, managing director of the Atlantic Championship Powered by Mazda, a top stepping-stone series for young drivers says, "I'm a fan of Jessica's. I like her speed and her poise. She has everything it takes to be successful in the sport; she's going to have a very good career."

And from the corporate world comes a high-powered endorsement. John Doonan, Manager of Motorsports Team Development for **Mazda** North American Operations sees big things for Brannam; "She's very personable, a very attractive young woman. She has been very successful in karting. She has very supportive parents and a network behind her as she's attempting to climb the open-wheel ladder."

And her team of choice for taking that next step up the ladder is an ideal fit for the young driver. Stars & Stripes Motorsports is an experienced, professional organization with activities that range from training young drivers to hosting corporate team-building events. Team principal Jim Elliott has been a racing fixture since the CAN-AM days of the 1960s. With a background as driver, team manager and aviation engineer, Elliott's primary job is overseeing all daily race operations and event planning, but with a mechanical background in aviation, he is also hands-on during race weekends, working with car set-up and maintenance.

Also a major part of the Stars & Stripes organization are team partners Dan and Barb Bush. Dan is a long-time SCCA spec racer and SCCA-certified driving instructor who assists with day-to-day operations of the Stars & Stripes team. Barb Bush is in charge of the team's extensive hospitality program.

"We're extremely excited about next season with Jessica and are working closely with her and her management to make sure that all the resources and corporate backing is in place to provide her with a thoroughly professional effort equal to her talent," says Elliott. "As part of that effort, we are moving Stars & Stripes Motorsports from Tulsa to Charlotte, North Carolina to increase the team's competitiveness through access to all the motorsports companies and team personnel there. It's also clear to us that the Star Mazda Championship is so competitive that two-car teams with drivers and engineers who work closely together have a real advantage. With that in mind, we are interviewing potential teammates for Jessica and hope to make an announcement soon."

Star Mazda Championship alumni include Indy Car stars Graham Rahal and Marco Andretti, as well as hot NASCAR newcomer Michael McDowell. Star Mazda Championship racers are high-tech open-wheel cars with a carbon fiber chassis, fully-adjustable suspension and 6-speed sequential gearbox. The engine is Mazda's legendary 'Renesis' rotary, race-tuned to produce 250 horsepower, speeds of over 160 mph and 0 to 60 mph acceleration of 2.8 seconds.

The 'single-spec' engineering of Star Mazda Championship race cars showcases driving talent instead of big budgets. All races are broadcast in a 1-hour show on the SPEED Channel. Prize money approaches \$1.5 million, including a Mazda-sponsored drive for the Star Mazda series champion in the next step up the motorsports ladder, the Atlantic Championship Powered by Mazda.

For 2009, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear has announced an 11-weekend, 13-race schedule that begins at Sebring in March, ends at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in October. And, for the first time since 2006, includes two oval-track races to better prepare young drivers on the way up for the various kinds of tracks they will encounter when competing in the Indy Racing League.

For further information on Jessica Brannam, visit www.jessicabrannam.com. For interviews, photos, or to explore sponsorship and co-promotional opportunities, contact Stars & Stripes Motorsports principal Jim Elliott at Starsstripesms@aol.com. Stars & Stripes Motorsports is located at 5809 S. 94th E. Pl, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74145. Phone (918) 760-7343 / Fax (918) 252-8895. The team web site is www.StarsAndStripesMS.com.

For further information on the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear, visit www.StarMazda.com or contact series Communications Director Peter Frey at (818) 398-5733 or StarMazdaPR@aol.com.

