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Andersen Racing Makes Final Preparations For Star Mazda Doubleheader Saturday and Sunday at Autobahn Chicago

JOLIET, Ill., July 24 — Andersen Racing's Richard Kent topped the charts in the afternoon test session on Thursday while one of his three teammates, Joel Miller, set the fastest lap recorded by the Palmetto, Fla.-based team in practice Friday as the team prepared for this weekend's Harrah's Grand Prix Star Mazda doubleheader at the Autobahn Country Club.

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It's one of the biggest weekends of the year for the series, which is presented by Goodyear, since it's the second and final doubleheader of 2009 and both races will be televised live on HDnet. Saturday's race will be broadcast from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Eastern time, while Sunday's will air during coverage that runs from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern time.

Rounds 8 and 9 of the 13-race series will be the Star Mazda set's first races ever at this 3.56-mile, 21-turn road course. Kent, Miller and Conor Daly participated in the team's private test here on June 29, while a fourth teammate, Denis Navarro, took his first laps here on Thursday. All four said it will be hard to pass here, and that the track surface was very bumpy.

Qualifying well will be very important.

The weatherman may add to the challenge too. According to The Weather Channel there is a 50 percent chance of thunderstorms tonight, and a few of them may be severe. Saturday and Sunday's forecast is for partly cloudy skies and only a 20 percent chance of rain on Saturday and 10 percent on Sunday, but there could be rain or at least a green track when qualifying for Round 8 gets underway at 8 a.m. Saturday.

The Andersen Racing drivers will try to take it all in stride. Kent, of Clifton Reynes, England, drives the No. 33 sponsored by Traka and Allied Interior Products. Miller, of Hesperia, Calif., drives the No. 2 sponsored by Fader Higher Productions, eSoles Custom Footbeds, Doug Mockett & Co., Burns Truck & Trailer and Brazos Bend Energy Services. Daly, a MAZDASPEED Motorsports driver development pilot, drives the No. 22 sponsored by Indeck, Cytomax, College Network and Merchant Services. He expects many family members and friends to be on hand here to cheer him on since it's the Star Mazda event that is closest to his home in Noblesville, Ind. Navarro, of Sao Paulo, Brazil, is in charge of the No. 21 sponsored by Navarro Medicines Distribution and Allied Interior Products.

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All four Andersen Racing Star Mazda cars are also sporting the logo of Best Friends Animal Society as a salute to that not-for-profit animal welfare group, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this month. The donated signage draws attention to Best Friends' quarter century of service to the welfare of abused, abandoned animals at its 3,700-acre sanctuary in southwestern Utah, and for its on-going campaign work across the United States. Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets program includes national campaigns in key American cities to address the problems of saving pit bull dogs, speaking out against puppy mills, addressing the problem of cat overpopulation and striving that one day there will be no more homeless pets. More information on the organization can be obtained at bestfriends.org.

In addition to practicing and providing input towards the set-ups being used on their cars, the Andersen Racing drivers were busy other ways on Friday too. Daly and Kent took time out to visit the children's ward of nearby Provena St. Joseph Hospital as part of their duties in the Racing for Kids program. Miller spent some time doing college homework for a mechanical engineering programming course he's taking this summer.

Tomorrow's schedule shows qualifying for Round 8 at 8 a.m. followed by that race at 1:05 p.m. Qualifying for Round 9 follows at 6:35 p.m.

Sunday's race starts at 1 p.m. All times are local.

After this doubleheader the series travels to the Trois-Rivieres street course in Trois-Rivieres, Quebec for a race on Aug. 16. The rest of the schedule can be found at starmazda.com.

Allied Building Products Corp. and Lafarge North America sponsor Andersen Racing, the development team of Rahal Letterman Racing. The team's Web site is located at andersenracingteam.com. Information on the team's 1-mile road course test track at its headquarters can be found online at andersenracepark.com.

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Driver quotes follow:

Conor Daly: “The track is OK. It’s rough, but it’s a fun track. It’s really difficult to pass here though.

“I don’t think it will rain, but all the tracks are the same when it’s wet — you just have to try to find the best line through the rain.”

Richard Kent: “It’s bumpy. The first turn on the first lap is going to be interesting. If you’re on the outside it’s going to be tough. It’s tough to pass here regardless; qualifying well is crucial here.

“If it rains tomorrow it will be even more interesting, because none of us have driven here in the wet. I’ve never even driven this car in the wet before.”

Joel Miller: “It’s a country club; fans can drive their street cars here when we’re done.

“Turn 2 is slippery. In terms of the bumps, it’s like a street course. It’s 3 and a half miles and it has 21 turns, so you’re always doing something. I’ve been on more physical tracks than this, but you’re never at rest here; you’re always doing something.

“Even as a kid from Southern California, I think I’ll be OK if it rains tomorrow because I’ve driven a Star Mazda car in the rain before and done well. If it rains, everybody will have to just take their best guess on the set-up.

“The set-up is a compromise here anyway, since there are so many different corners.”

Denis Navarro: “It’s a long track, with lots of turns and it has a lot of bumps. It’s going to be hard to pass. I never raced on a track like this in America before. It’s a little like the track in Brasilia.

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“This is only my second day of driving here. My teammates tested here, but I wasn’t able to do that. But I’m learning the course and we’re working on the set-up.”

The stats so far:

Test Session 1 (Thursday, 9:50 a.m. to 10:35 a.m.):

1. Peter Dempsey, 2:12.285, 96.882 mph, lap 14
4. Conor Daly, 2:13.600, 95.928 mph, lap 14
5. Richard Kent, 2:13.880, 95.728 mph, lap 14
9. Joel Miller, 2:14.778, 95.090 mph, lap 9
15. Denis Navarro, 2:1.929, 93.596 mph, lap 2

Test Session 2 (Thursday, 3 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.):

1. Richard Kent, 2:13.189, 96.224 mph, lap 14
8. Joel Miller, 2:14.139, 95.543 mph, lap 8
11. Conor Daly, 2:14.881, 95.017 mph, lap 13
14. Denis Navarro, 2:15.337, 94.697 mph, lap 16

Practice 1 (Friday, 10:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.):

1. Peter Dempsey, 2:11.681, 97.326 mph, lap 2
3. Joel Miller, 2:12.299, 96.871 mph, lap 15
4. Conor Daly, 2:12.355, 96.830 mph, lap 16
13. Denis Navarro, 2:14.098, 95.572 mph, lap 11
15. Richard Kent, 2:14.681, 95.158 mph, lap 10

Practice 2 (Friday, 4:45 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.):

1. Peter Dempsey, 2:11.992, 97.097 mph, lap 4 of 5
4. Richard Kent, 2:12.634, 96.627 mph, lap 8 of 17
6. Conor Daly, 2:13.144, 96.257 mph, lap 14 of 18
7. Joel Miller, 2:13.362, 96.099 mph, lap 9 of 15
15. Denis Navarro, 2:14.222, 95.484 mph, lap 11 of 18

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About Allied Building Products Corp.:

Allied Building Products Corp., headquartered in East Rutherford, N.J., is one of the largest roofing and siding distributors in the United States. Founded in 1950 with five employees and two trucks, today it is a \$1.8 billion building material distribution company with over 3,500 employees, more than 200 branches in 30 states, well over one million square feet of office and warehouse space, and an inventory of approximately 85,000 products, from residential roofing and siding to doors, windows, waterproofing, manufactured stone, interior products and commercial roofing systems. For more information see alliedbuilding.com.

About Andersen Racing:

Andersen Racing strives to provide the best and most comprehensive training possible for future open-wheel superstars while giving its marketing partners media exposure and hospitality opportunities at some of the most prestigious events in North America. It provides a unique, four-step program utilizing multiple entries in four different platforms: karting, Formula BMW Americas, Star Mazda and Firestone Indy Lights (televised on VERSUS). In 2008 it fielded multiple entries in 42 races in 18 states and provinces at some of the best facilities on the continent, including the famed Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Andersen Racing won the team championship for 2008 for both the F2000 Championship Series presented by Hoosier Racing Tire and the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear. Two of its drivers finished first and second in the F2000 driver point standings, while another was sixth. Three of its Star Mazda drivers placed third, fifth and sixth in that series' driver standings. RLR/Andersen Racing finished sixth in the 2008 Firestone Indy Lights team standings, while one of its drivers placed fifth in that series' driver point standings.

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Andersen Racing's principals, brothers Dan and John Andersen, have extensive experience in series administration as well as team management. They've worked with many of today's top open-wheel stars, including several Indy 500 winners.

Andersen Racing is sponsored by Allied Building Products Corp. and Lafarge North America. It is the official development team of Rahal Letterman Racing. The team is headquartered at Andersen RacePark, an 18-acre facility in Palmetto, Fla. that includes a 1-mile road course test track. For more information see andersenracingteam.com and andersenracepark.com.