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Andersen Racing Qualifies First, Second and Third For Star Mazda Season-Opener

SEBRING, Fla., March 18 — Three Andersen Racing drivers qualified first, second and third Thursday morning for Friday's season opener of the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear. Anders Krohn won the pole by 0.259 of a second over Mikael Grenier, setting a new Sebring International Raceway record in the process, and rookie Tristan Vautier qualified third.

It was the first time in the Palmetto, Fla.-based team's history that it had cars in the first three spots in qualifications.

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The top 13 cars in the 23-car field broke Dane Cameron's former track record, including the 12th-place car driven by Court Vernon, who was a late entry into the Andersen Racing stable. The team's fifth driver here, Dom Bastien, who competes in the Masters class, will start 19th when the field erupts in a standing start for the 45-minute race Friday at 12:45 p.m.

Krohn, a Norwegian driver who now lives in Houston, took only 1:58.053 to tour the bumpy, 3.7-mile, 17-turn road course in his blue No. 47 that is sponsored by Trallfa Industries, Colosseum Dental, Norse Cutting & Abandonment, Bring Logistics US Inc., SR Transport, ZATGraphics.com, Rioja Tapas Restaurant, Eagles Canyon Raceway and Repcon Media. His fastest lap in the 45-minute qualifying session, which was slowed once for a red flag that lasted about 10 minutes to clean up an accident in Turn 1, was done at an average speed of 112.831 miles per hour.

Krohn was the first driver to break into the 1:59s and he held the pole early, but then the top spot was exchanged between he, Grenier, David Ostella, Joao Horto and Richard Kent. This year a driver loses all his times if he stops to change his Goodyear tires, which most of the top competitors did late in the session, gambling that they could go faster with the fresher rubber. Grenier held the top spot with 5 minutes left in the session but Krohn edged ahead with a flyer with only 3:35 remaining.

Grenier, the pride of Stoneham, Quebec, will start alongside his teammate thanks to his best lap, which only took 1:58.312 for an average speed of 112.584 mph. His No. 17, which was hampered by traffic, is sponsored by NAPA Auto Parts, HS Telecom and Desharnais.

Krohn won a F2000 championship with Andersen Racing in 2008 and Grenier ran six of last year's 13 Star Mazda races with the team, but Vautier was making his first start in a race in America and with this team, which is sponsored by Allied Building Products Corp. Vautier, of Corenc, France, will start right behind Krohn thanks to a lap that took 1:58.724 for an average speed of 112.193 mph. His No. 38 carries the colors of Moulin T.P., Cecibon, Circuit du Laquis and Fontanel Promotion.

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Vernon, of Key Biscayne, Fla., stepped into the team's No. 27 for the first time yesterday and was also immediately fast, setting the fourth-fastest time in the final practice session. He'll start the race from the outside of Row 6 with a qualifying time of 1:59.803 (111.183 mph) in an effort supported by Mangroove Boats and Capt. Harry's Fishing Supply in Miami.

Another Floridian, West Palm Beach's Bastien, who like Vautier was born in France, qualified 19th with a lap in 2:02.731 for an average speed of 108.530 mph.

Andersen Racing has its own 1-mile road course test track at its headquarters in Palmetto, Fla., Andersen RacePark. It fields cars in karting, Star Mazda and Firestone Indy Lights.

Andersen Racing's sister company, Andersen Promotions, administers the USF2000 National Championship presented by Cooper Tires and powered by Mazda, which will hold a doubleheader next weekend in St. Petersburg, Fla. That series and Star Mazda are both part of the IRL's Road to Indy program and the MAZDASPEED Motorsports driver development system. Andersen Racing's Star Mazda and Firestone Indy Lights team will also be in action at St. Petersburg next weekend.

Andersen Racing's Web site is at andersenracingteam.com. The Star Mazda series' Web site is located at starmazda.com.

Post-qualifying quotes follow:

Anders Krohn: "The team has been working so hard all winter. With the experience they have it's a perfect match. I'm just as proud of our team's one-two-three results in qualifying as I am that I won the pole. I value this team as my family, and qualifying so well is quite an accomplishment.

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“Changing tires near the end of the session wasn’t as much as a gamble as you’d think because at least we had the full 45 minutes to run in the session. I trusted my team to make the right call, and they definitely did.

“I had no problems at all. I just tried my best. I only had traffic on one flyer. The car has been on rails all week. Now I hope we can carry that into the race tomorrow and be perfect.

“This year even more than any other it is my sponsors that make this effort happen, and I appreciate them and my team so much. Tomorrow I’ll have 15 guests here. We’re waiting for T-shirts to be delivered, but if they arrive they’ll all be wearing special black-and-white T-shirts that say, ‘I am the Viking.’ Hopefully I can cap it all off with a strong result in the race tomorrow. I must finish in a good position.”

Mikael Grenier: “I had a lot of traffic; on my best lap I had traffic. We tried something with the wing that didn’t work as well as we’d hoped, but second is not too bad. Anders just had a better lap.

“I didn’t spin at all, but once in Corner 1 I went straight into the grass and then back on. But it was a good result for the team. I’m not going to just let my teammate win, but our main goal is to finish one-two-three and we need to take care of each other. Anders was a little faster today, but I’m always stronger in the race than I am in qualifying.”

Tristan Vautier: “We took a little too much wing out I think, but my car was good. We struggled a little bit on new tires, but third is still good. It’s very good for the team, and I’m happy for the team.

“I didn’t have any problems. I got up on a curb once, but that’s all.

“This is my first race in America. I tested a Star Mazda car here and I tested a Skip Barber car at Laguna, but that’s it. I’ve done some standing starts in Europe, but this will be my first time to do one with a Star Mazda car.”

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Court Vernon: “I’ve only done one Star Mazda race before, which was at Road Atlanta with a different team.

“Today’s qualifying was a learning experience. The conditions of the track changed from yesterday with the different rubber on the track. I tried to adapt, but we ended up 12th. We changed tires about halfway through.

“I just want to thank Andersen Racing for letting me drive.”

Dom Bastien: “My time wasn’t bad, but I was hoping to get out of the ‘02s and into the ‘01s, and I didn’t quite make it. I had a lot of traffic though.

“Everything is good; the car is fantastic. This is some outfit, for sure!

“For me, having fun is numero uno. I’m not on my way to Formula 1; I’m just out here having fun trying to better my own laps times and competing against the kids.”

Dan Andersen (team co-owner): “I’m extremely proud of our team. We’re off to a great start, but tomorrow’s race and the championship are the most important. Our team has never finished one-two-three in a race before, and we’d love to do just that tomorrow.

“I’m very proud of the team we’ve assembled for 2010, both on the driver side and the staff side. They’ve worked very hard in the off-season, and so far this week the results have shown that their hard work is paying off.”

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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 program utilizing multiple entries in three different platforms: karting, Star Mazda and Firestone Indy Lights.

A sister company, Andersen Promotions, administers the USF2000 National Championship presented by Cooper Tires and powered by Mazda. It is part of both the Indy Racing League's Road to Indy program and the MAZDASPEED Motorsports driver development system.

Andersen Racing is sponsored by Allied Building Products Corp. and Lafarge North America. 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, andersenkarting.com, andersenracepark.com and usf2000.com.

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The event stats so far:

Practice Session 1 (Tuesday, 10:25 a.m. to 11:05 a.m.):

1. Mikael Grenier, 1:56.936, 113.908 mph, on lap 13
2. Tristan Vautier, 1:57.464, 113.396 mph, on lap 13
3. Anders Krohn, 1:58.323, 112.573 mph, on lap 12
12. Dom Bastien, 2:02.809, 108.461 mph on lap 12

Practice Session 2 (Tuesday, 5:20 p.m. to 6 p.m.):

1. Anders Krohn, 1:57.892, 112.985 mph, on lap 10
2. Tristan Vautier, 1:58.030, 112.853 mph, on lap 5
3. Mikael Grenier, 1:58.220, 112.671 mph, on lap 4
18. Dom Bastien, 2:02.785, 108.482 mph on lap 12

Practice Session 3 (Wednesday, 8:45 a.m. to 9:25 a.m.):

1. Mikael Grenier, 1:57.740, 113.131 mph
2. Tristan Vautier, 1:57.783, 113.089 mph
3. Anders Krohn, 1:58.082, 112.803 mph
8. Court Vernon, 1:59.616, 111.356 mph
21. Dom Bastien, 2:04.005, 107.415 mph

Practice Session 4 (Wednesday, 11:25 a.m. to 12:05 a.m.):

1. Conor Daly, 1:57.600, 113.265 mph
2. Anders Krohn, 1:58.072, 112.813 mph
3. Tristan Vautier, 1:58.512, 112.394 mph
4. Court Vernon, 1:58.571, 112.338 mph
5. Mikael Grenier, 1:58.618, 112.293 mph
20. Dom Bastien, 2:02.213, 108.990 mph

Qualifying (Thursday, 8:45 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.):

1. Anders Krohn, 1:58.053, 112.831 mph*
2. Mikael Grenier, 1:58.312, 112.584 mph
3. Tristan Vautier, 1:58.724, 112.193 mph
12. Court Vernon, 1:59.803, 111.183 mph
19. Dom Bastien, 2:02.731, 108.530 mph

* New track record, breaking Dane Cameron's 1:59.986 mph set in 2007.