

NEWS from TEAM

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Team GDT's Ryan Tveter (pictured) and Andrés Méndez both turned their first 10 laps in Star Mazda competition during a Thursday night practice session at the St. Petersburg Grand Prix.

Team GDT Concentrates On Tire Strategy, Learning the Course Thursday

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla., March 22 — Thursday night's 30-minute practice session for the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear could play a significant role in determining the outcome of the series' two races at the St. Petersburg street course Saturday at 1 p.m. and Sunday at 10:05 a.m.

Tire strategy and how quickly its two rookies can come to terms with the 14-turn, 1.8-mile street course were topics foremost on the minds

of members of Dallas-based Team GDT Thursday. Although team owner J.W. Roberts won the Expert Series race-within-a race here last year enroute to earning his second championship in that division, its other two drivers — 17-year-old Ryan Tveter of Oyster Bay, N.Y. and 19-year-old Andrés Méndez of Bogotá, Columbia — are making their first Star Mazda start ever this weekend. Roberts drives car number 65; Tveter is number 33 and Méndez is number 53.

A new rule in Star Mazda this year limits each entry to one set of used Goodyears and three sets of brand-new tires to use for all the sessions each weekend. How each engineer and driver choose to manage that allotment may end up playing a role in qualifying and the races' outcome, since more rubber on a tire usually translates to faster lap times.

"Tire strategy will be important," agreed Tveter, who got his first look at the course Thursday morning and

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Photos may be downloaded off
Team GDT's Facebook page.



gave it an immediate thumbs up.

“My first goal will be to finish both races, but top-10s would be nice,” he said.

Although this is Tveter’s first Star Mazda race ever he’s competed in support events on the street courses at Trois-Rivières, Quebec and Baltimore.

Méndez, who is sponsored by Datafile International SA and Grupo Kriterion, is making his first Star Mazda start too. It’s his first street race in cars but he’s competed in “about 10” kart races on street courses in his native Columbia.

“There are a lot of street-course kart races in Columbia and they’re fun; we even added some jumps to one of them,” he said. “Nelson Piquet comes back to race in them sometimes because they’re so much fun.

“I won two of them, so I know about curbs and walls,” he added. “I hope that helps me this weekend at St. Pete.”

In Thursday night’s practice session Tveter ended up 16th with a fastest time of 1:16.291 (84.938 miles per hour). Roberts was 17th overall and first in the Expert Series with a 1:17.187 (83.952 mph). Roberts’ car carries the colors of the team’s primary sponsor, General Datatech, L.P. The Expert Series features drivers over 30.

Even more importantly, Tveter, Méndez and Roberts all completed 10 laps. Méndez’s time wasn’t



Team GDT Manager Paul Mata helps team owner J.W. Roberts get buckled into his Star Mazda car prior to practice Thursday night in St. Petersburg, Fla. Roberts was the fastest Expert Series driver in the session. He won that class at this event last year, as well as the Expert Series championship.

recorded due to a problem with his car’s transponder, but the team’s primary goal in the session was not pure speed but for the rookies to learn the track and Roberts to get reacclimated to it.

As expected Connor De Phillippi set the fastest lap in the session with a 1:12.084 (89.895 mph). The track record is 1:10.352 set in 2010 by Conor Daly.

Friday’s Star Mazda schedule includes another 30 minutes of practice at 11:05 a.m. followed by Peak Performance qualifying at 4:40 p.m. For more information, including live timing and scoring, see the series’ Web site at starmazda.com. Other news is posted on indycar.com and gpstpete.com. Fans can learn more about Team GDT on its Facebook page or through Twitter @TeamGDT.

About Team GDT:

Team GDT is a multi-car professional race team headquartered in Dallas that is owned by businessman and racing driver J.W. Roberts. The team focuses on the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear, the second step in the IZOD IndyCar Series’ Mazda Road to Indy.

In 2011 Team GDT won its second Star Mazda Expert Series championship in a row with Roberts behind the wheel. The Expert Series is a race-within-a-race and a championship-within-a-championship for drivers 30 and older. Roberts won the Expert title driving his Team GDT/General Datatech Mazda No. 65 with a total of five class victories. Team GDT is also well known for nurturing rising stars, including Motorsport Ireland “Young Racing Driver of the Year” Patrick McKenna and multi-Star Mazda race winners Alex Ardoyn and Richard Kent. Fans can learn more about Team GDT on its Facebook page or through Twitter @TeamGDT.