



Linares Racing's
Camilo Schmidt (#21)
won Saturday's
Star Mazda race
at Edmonton.

(Eric McCombs photo)

Linares Racing's Schmidt Wins Edmonton Star Mazda Race Saturday In Dramatic Fashion

EDMONTON, Alberta, Canada, July 21 — In one of the most dramatic finishes in Star Mazda history, Linares Racing's Camilo Schmidt of Mérida, Venezuela posted his first victory ever in the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear Saturday on the airport street course at Edmonton Indy.

It was also the first series victory for Linares Racing, which made its debut in this Mazda Road to Indy series three years ago.

Schmidt, a rookie in this series,

had never led a single lap in Star Mazda competition before, but he led the last two laps in Saturday's wet and wild 30-minute, 15-lap race.

The 16-year-old's engineer at Linares Racing, Stephen Dreizler, made the call to keep Schmidt on slick Goodyear tires throughout the race. Although Schmidt spun and kept going twice during the early stages of his dramatic charge, he not only persevered throughout the rain that steadily increased throughout the event, but he was able to

fly through the field after starting way back in 15th position. He advanced from fourth to first in a wild restart on lap 13 and then sealed up the victory when the race ended under caution two laps later.

Schmidt's previous best finish in Star Mazda competition was a ninth-place finish earlier this year. This is only his first year racing cars, but he's a five-time Venezuelan karting champion. Some of his karting races were held in the rain, and Schmidt used that training to his advan-

tage. That experience coupled with his team's expert car preparation and the gutsy call not to pit for rain tires paid off handsomely.

"I want to thank the entire Linares Racing team, and especially my engineer, Stephen Dreizler, who made that call on the radio," Schmidt said afterwards. "It was the craziest race I was ever in, but my car was great!"

"We're really happy," said Carlos Linares, the team manager and Schmidt's teammate. "Our team has been really pushing to get a win, and it's finally here. We showed that we can win Star Mazda races. Both my car and Camilo's car were handling great. Camilo did a great job; he was driving really well. We're all very happy!"

Schmidt had an incredible standing start, as he vaulted from 15th to ninth on the first lap by passing Ashley Freiberg, Connor De Phillippi, Zack Meyer, Ryan Tveter, Diego Ferreira and Stefan Rzadzinski. He advanced to eighth on lap three when Tveter was hit and spun. He moved up one more spot to seventh on the next lap when both he and De Phillippi passed Juan Piedrahita. It only took him five laps to crack the top five, which he accomplished when he passed Gustavo Menezes and Gabby Chaves dropped back.

Schmidt stayed in fifth place through lap seven, but he dropped two positions on lap eight. Once again he quickly regrouped, and he regained sixth spot on lap nine when Martin Scuncio fell back right before the first full-course caution waved on lap nine. Some drivers pitted for rain tires at that point and suddenly Schmidt was in fourth place trailing only the leader, Jack Hawksworth; Menezes and Piedrahita.

More fireworks were in store during the restart on lap 13. Even Schmidt isn't exactly sure what happened, but when the leaders came out of Turn 1 his No. 21 emerged from the spray first. The yellow came out to make order out of the cars that had spun, and the race ended two laps later under yellow with Schmidt as the victor. Sage Karam ended up second and Chaves placed third.

Linares, of Caracas, Venezuela, almost got a top-five finish too. He started 17th in the Linares Racing No. 20, which is sponsored by Mindeporte. He was sixth before the final restart, but he ended up in 14th place.

"When we went into Turn 1 on that restart it was totally blind due to the spray," Linares said. "I hit a puddle and spun and that was the end of the race for me, but before that the car was great.

I'm just so glad it worked out well for Camilo. It's a great day for our team!"

The second half of the Edmonton Star Mazda doubleheader will be held Sunday at 9:30 a.m. local time (11:30 a.m. Eastern) prior to the IZOD IndyCar Series headliner. Live timing and scoring is planned for StarMazda.com. Linares Racing, which is headquartered in Brownsburg, Ind., has a Web site at LinaresRacing.com. The event's Web site is at EdmontonIndy.com.

The Edmonton doubleheader will be broadcast on a tape-delayed basis on the Mazda Motorsports Hour on Discovery's Velocity Network, Canada's Rogers SportsNet and ESPN International. The coverage will air at noon Eastern on Saturday, Aug. 25 in the United States. Check local listings for other areas.

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