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Tveter Records Best Finish to Date With a Fifth in Star Mazda Action Saturday at Edmonton Indy

EDMONTON, Alberta, Canada, July 24 — Rookie Ryan Tveter of Oyster Bay, N.Y. achieved his first top-five finish in only his fifth race in the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear last Saturday during a doubleheader at City Centre Raceway that was part of the Edmonton Indy event.

The 18-year-old from Oyster Bay, N.Y. followed that up with a tenth-place finish in the second half of the doubleheader on Sunday in Team GDT's No. 33, which carried the colors of Rogers TV and Motorola Mobility Canada.

The series is part of the Mazda Road to Indy program designed to train future open-wheel superstars. The races supported the IZOD IndyCar Series headliner that was won by Helio Castroneves.

Tveter started 16th in the 19-car field in Saturday's 30-minute Star Mazda race. The series features standing starts similar to Formula 1, and Tveter had a great one. He passed five cars on the first lap to rise to tenth position, and then he passed another one on lap two to settle into eighth place.

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Unfortunately at that point another driver hit his car. Although it didn't receive any significant damage in the tussle, Tveter found himself back in 15th place on lap three.

There was nothing to do but regroup, but by that time a pouring rain was falling on the 2.256-mile/3.631-kilometer, 13-turn temporary airport street course. Tveter was on slick tires, not rain tires, which made the going very treacherous. He did a 360-degree spin once and kept going, ala Danny Sullivan's famous spin-and-win in the 1985 Indy 500. But it was hard to pass due to the rain and because the field was getting spread out with no full-course caution flags to tighten it.

Finally a full-course yellow flew on lap nine, when Tveter was in 13th position. Tveter dove into the pits for rain tires at that point and got ready for the restart on lap 13.

The green only lasted for four turns but he certainly made the best of it, as he rose from 12th to fifth place before the yellow came out again. The race ended under that yellow with 15 laps completed. Another competitor passed him under that second and final yellow-flag period on lap 14 so the scoreboard showed that Tveter was in sixth position at the checkered, but the officials reviewed video footage and cornerworkers' reports afterwards and ruled that Tveter had indeed finished fifth.

"Saturday's race went extremely well," Tveter said afterwards. "I was in the top five, which is a wonderful result.

"It was a crazy race and there were a lot of incidents because of the rain. I had a great standing start and a great restart. I think if the race would have lasted a few more laps I might have been able to finish even a little higher, because some of the cars that finished ahead of me were still on slicks."

Although the weather was better for Sunday's 45-minute race, it was a long one for Tveter because he had to nurse his car throughout the event after contact with another driver on the first lap. He started 13th in that race, but his car suffered damage to its suspension, wheels and front wing in the incident. He had additional contact with another driver on lap six and fell back to 14th place, but he rose to 11th at the end of the race due to some late-race attrition ahead of him. He gained one more spot to finish tenth after another driver's car did not pass the post-race technical inspection.

"Overall it was a good experience because I brought the car home and finished the race, so I'm happy with that result too," Tveter said.

"I want to thank Team GDT and my partners, Rogers TV and Motorola Mobility Canada. We're really happy, and we hope to carry this momentum on to Trois-Rivières!"

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The next Star Mazda event is Aug. 3-5 in Trois-Rivières, Quebec.

"It was a very productive weekend," said Tveter's engineer, noted open-wheel engineer Remi Lanteigne of Toronto, who has worked with many other top racers, including Castro-neves. "Ryan progressed well and learned a lot during the weekend. He showed very good car control and patience in the rain, and he capitalized on every opportunity he had. His starts were especially good, and he's gaining speed. The next race should be a big step forward again."

As part of his preparation for the Edmonton event, Tveter and a few other drivers such as David Ostella, Bryson Schutte and Richard Boake practiced at Goodwood Kartways in Toronto, which is operated by another famous name in the junior formula car community, the Di Leo brothers, Daniel and Marco.

"Testing in the karts in the controlled environment at Goodwood Kartways was a good learning experience for Ryan, because it helped improve his race craft and contributed to him being more comfortable in traffic," Lanteigne said.

While he was in Edmonton Tveter also made a visit to a local children's hospital as part of the "Racing for Kids" program.

"The Racing for Kids visit to the Stollery Children's Hospital was an amazing experience," Tveter said. "It was so much fun to be with the kids. Their resilience is inspiring. They were all extremely excited. I was able to show them my helmet and the Racing for Kids show car, as well as sign autograph cards and hats. It really was a blast. Hopefully I'll be able to do more visits at some other races this season."

Fans can follow Tveter through his Facebook page or on Twitter @RyanTveter. Other information is available on the series' Web site at StarMazda.com.

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