



For Immediate Release:

## **Team Pelfrey Enjoys Banner Weekend at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca Hawksworth Clinches Drivers Championship on Saturday; Team Honors Secured on Sunday**



MONTEREY, CALIF. (September 9, 2012) – The long trek from Baltimore last weekend to Monterey, California, for Rounds 15 and 16 of the Star Mazda Championship Presented by Goodyear paid off in style as Team Pelfrey's talented young English racer Jack Hawksworth secured the championship crown on Saturday with his eighth victory of the season. The Florida-based organization then put the equally coveted Team Championship beyond reach of its rivals today, with one race remaining in the season, when Hawksworth, Petri Suvanto and Gustavo Menezes all ran strong races to finish among the top eight at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca.

"We had a great weekend," said team owner Dale Pelfrey. "I'm just fortunate. We have some really good people. Geoff (Fickling) is heck of an organizer, a heck of an engineer, and all of his people are really dedicated to making it happen. We

have some pretty fine drivers, too. We've had some ups and downs this year but we ended up with a great weekend. This is fun. I really enjoy this series, and the whole Mazda Road to Indy program is a great idea. It's just great for young drivers. I'm looking forward to next year already!"

The weekend didn't start out too auspiciously when Menezes was taken out by a spinning car very early in the first practice session on Thursday. Indeed all three drivers struggled to find pace on the opening day. Come qualifying, however, Hawksworth rebounded to snatch his record-extending 11<sup>th</sup> PEAK Performance Pole Award of the season. He then led throughout the 30-minute race, holding off a determined late challenge from Gabby Chaves. Sage Karam, Hawksworth's closest rival in the points table, qualified a scant 0.006s slower but faded to seventh by the finish, which meant his championship quest was over and Hawksworth's title was assured.

A poor start dropped Suvanto from third to sixth, where he remained until Lap 16 when he profited from a mistake by Karam to finish fifth. Menezes moved up impressively from 11<sup>th</sup> on the grid to sixth at the finish.

Hawksworth started third on Sunday and immediately moved up to second behind Chaves. The 21-year-old from Bradford, Yorkshire, England, chased after Chaves, with the pressure of the championship lifted from his shoulders, but had to be content with second – his 12<sup>th</sup> podium finish of the season.

Menezes leapt from eighth to sixth and remained in contention with the leaders until Lap 10, when a freak occurrence caused his ignition switch to turn off when he bumped over a curb. Menezes resumed in 15<sup>th</sup> and stormed through to eighth, posting laps even faster than the leaders in the closing stages. Suvanto also suffered misfortune, being bumped out by a rival on the opening lap and dropping to eighth. He, too, posted an impressive recovery, rising to fifth at the finish and helping to secure the Team Championship for Team Pelfrey for the second year in succession.

"It's been a dream season and I'm so proud of the whole team, especially the way they performed this weekend when it came down to winning the championship," said Team Pelfrey Team Manager Geoff Fickling. "It was really sweet yesterday with the pole and the race win, to clinch the championship; and to clinch the Team Championship today made for a special weekend, so we'll go to Atlanta and go have some fun and try to win another race."

The 17-race Star Mazda Championship will conclude at Road Atlanta as part of the American Le Mans Series' Petit Le Mans weekend on October 19.

#### **WHAT THE DRIVERS SAID:**

Jack Hawksworth (#82 Team Pelfrey/TORGOEN Swiss Watches/EXA Networks) – Round 15, started first, finished first; Round 16, started third, finished second: “It’s a fantastic feeling. I came into this season knowing I needed to win the championship if I was going to have any chance of continuing my racing career, and I’m just so happy to have had Team Pelfrey helping me and supporting me all the way. They’ve given me fantastic equipment all year so it’s just a fantastic feeling to wrap it all up and achieve everything we set out to achieve at the start of the year. Today was a bit different, not having the pressure of the championship. I got off the line well and got into second and we were pretty quick but we didn’t have the setup quite right and I burned off the tires. I didn’t have anything for the guy ahead of us but we brought the car home and scored some more points, so it was good. It was just a great weekend all around really.”



Petri Suvanto (#81 Team Pelfrey/Mazda Road to Indy) – Round 15, started third, finished fifth; Round 16, started seventh, finished fifth: “My weekend was full of ups and downs. In practice and qualifying we were really quick and then Race 1 was a bit of disaster. I messed up the start and fell to sixth and was kind of stuck there the whole race, but today I got knocked off in the first corner and fell back to ninth but I worked my way back with a clean drive to fifth, so today was a lot better than yesterday.”

Gustavo Menezes (#83 Team Pelfrey/SafetyPark/Oakley) – Round 15, started 11th, finished eighth; Round 16, started eighth, finished eighth: “The weekend couldn’t have started any worse. There was an incident after just two laps of practice on Thursday when someone spun in the Corkscrew and took me out so we missed a whole bunch of track time. It was difficult to get the car right but we made some pretty drastic changes after qualifying 11th and we got a great start yesterday and I drove back up to sixth, so that was good. We knew that today’s race was a 45-minute race, so we changed some more things on the car to make sure the tires lasted. I got up to sixth at the start and we were right behind the front group. I was quite a bit quicker than the guys in front of me but I was saving my tires because it was still early in the race and I knew the last 15 minutes were going to be most important ones. Unfortunately, my ignition switch got knocked off when I ran over a curb, so I fell all the way back to 17th. But the car was great and the tires were working really well so I moved myself all the way back through two groups and I was actually running laps faster than the leaders. It was unfortunate really, but I was turning the same laps as the leaders so I think we easily had a podium car.”

#### **About Team Pelfrey:**

Dale Pelfrey’s race team, based in the St. Petersburg, Fla., area, is built upon the same principles he used 35 years ago when establishing his business career – hire the best, acquire the best and demand the best in order to achieve the most. After fielding cars in the IZOD IndyCar Series from 1998 until 2000, Team Pelfrey was reformed in 2011, winning on its Star Mazda debut and going on to earn the Team Championship as well as second and third in the drivers’ title-chase with Connor De Phillippi and Nick Andries. Team Pelfrey is fielding three cars in the 2012 Star Mazda series in addition to expanding its driver development program within the Mazda Road to Indy ladder system by supporting Spencer Pigot in the USF2000 Championship.

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