



ROCKET ROOKIE JOEL MILLER ON POLE FOR ROUND ONE OF 2008 STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP AT SEBRING

Sebring, FL (March 13) – The Rocket Rookie – perhaps not an official nickname yet, but certainly an apparently appropriate one. Under discussion is Joel Miller, the 2007 Skip Barber Champion and Star Mazda rookie who took the pole by more than a second in this afternoon's 40-minute qualifying session for tomorrow's Round One of the 2008 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear at Sebring.

Miller, who is racing the #20 JDC Motorsports/Skip Barber/K&N Mazda courtesy of a full-season sponsorship from the *MAZDASPEED* Motorsports Driver Development Ladder, turned a lap of 2:00.451 (110.584 mph) around the historic 17-turn, 3.7 mile Sebring International Raceway. It was not his fastest lap of the week – that being a 1:59.653 in testing on Tuesday morning – but it was more than a second clear of the 2nd-place qualifier, Charles Hall, of Sheffield, England, who set his time of 2:01.542 (109.592 mph) with a banzai run in the #77 Andersen Racing/Pardoes Solicitors/Allied Mazda on the final lap of the session.

“With the session nearing the end I was scared that I didn’t see a 2:59 lap on my dashboard data display because we were on new tires and I was kind of expecting it,” says the native of Hesperia, California. “We did that fast lap on Tuesday in the cool of the morning, and now that we have some experience with these new Goodyear radials, we’re starting to see some changes in their performance characteristics between hot and cold tracks. The main thing in getting the pole was out ‘out’ lap; we’ve been working on fast out laps all week on the advice of last year’s champion, Dane Cameron, who told me they can make all the difference between winning and losing. And he was right; we’re on the pole by more than a second in my first Star Mazda Championship race, and you can’t ask for more than that.”

To give credit where credit is due, the qualifying order was somewhat jumbled by a fairly long mid-session red flag caused by simultaneous misfortune to the cars that were running 2nd and 3rd at the time. The 2nd-place #18 JDC Motorsports/Brazilian Green Beef Mazda of Ernesto Otero slid into the tire wall nose first between corners 4 and 5, scattering tires on the track and bringing out the red flag. A more mysterious form of unfortunate lightning hit the #51/Mundill Racing/Oral and Facial Surgery Center Mazda of Louisiana racer Alex Ardoin when his engine suddenly stopped on track and he was unable to coast the car to a safe area.

When the track was cleared and the cars resumed qualifying, there were six minutes left – time enough for the out lap and two hot laps... which worked to the benefit of Otero, whose fast lap of 2:01.790 (109.369 mph) held up to keep him in the top-3, but left Ardoin sliding down the grid to wind up 7th with a lap of 2:02.043 (109.142 mph). Rounding out the top-5 were Californian Nick Haye whose lap of 2:01.921 (109.251 mph) in the #4 JDC Motorsports/Quantum Sphere/All-Star Ice Mazda was good enough for 4th on the grid, and Eric Freiberg of Homer Glen, Illinois, who hustled his #14 World

Speed Motorsports/Collision Damage Experts Mazda around to a lap of 2:01.975 (109.203 mph).

The top female racer of the three in the field was College Station, Texas native Kristy Kester, half of the unique brother/sister Kester Racing team. Her lap of 2:02.489 (108.744 mph) in the #48 Kester Racing/Texas World Speedway/Unifirst Mazda put her 11th on the grid (and – not to stir up any sibling rivalry- handily ahead of her brother, Jeff Kester, who qualified 20th). Fastest among the Expert Series drivers (ages 30-44) was Vancouver, B.C. native Chris Cumming with an 18th-place lap of 2:03.602 (107.765 mph) in his #16 World Speed Motorsports/Inviro Medical Mazda. Leading the Master Series (age 45 and over) drivers was Chuck Hulse of Yorba Linda, California. His lap of 2:03.691 ((107.688 mph) in the #12 JDC Motorsports/Silicon Salvage Mazda was good for 21st on the 27-car starting grid.

The 45-minute Round One of the 2008 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear will begin with the series' first-ever standing start at 2:50 pm Friday, March 14. The race will be broadcast on the SPEED Channel; for the exact air date and time, log on to www.speedtv.com/programs.

For more information on the Star Mazda Championship and its drivers, as well as the Mazda Motorsports ladder system, please visit www.starmazda.com and www.mazdausa.com. Star Mazda Communications Director Peter Frey can be reached at (818) 398-5733 / StarMazdaPR@aol.com.

On any given weekend, there are more Mazdas on the road-race tracks of America than any other brand of vehicle. At the track, you'll see MX-5 Miata, RX-8, MAZDA3, MAZDA6, RX-7 and other vintage Mazda models competing, because every Mazda has the Soul of a Sports Car.

For more information on the various Mazda spec series, visit:

www.champcaratlantic.com

www.starmazda.com

www.skipbarber.com

www.mx-5cup.com

Dean Case / Communications Officer / MAZDASPEED Motorsports

Office - (310) 755-7403 / Cell - (310) 318-4582 / E-mail: dean@RWB-LLC.com