

DIVERSITY GOES ZOOM-ZOOM – UNIQUE MIX OF DRIVERS TO TAKE THE GREEN FLAG AT THE STAR MAZDA SEASON OPENER

When the cars competing in the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear take to the track for the opening race of the 2008 season at the 56th annual Mobil1 12 Hours of Sebring, the drivers under those colorfully-painted helmets will represent a diversity of nationality, gender, age and family relationships totally unique in the world of auto racing.

Included in the mix are racers from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Ireland and Gibraltar. There are two fast young female drivers, drivers ranging in age from 16 to 64, a father/son team and a brother/sister team.

And the series in which they are competing offers equal diversity. For the younger drivers on their way up the Motorsports ladder, the Star Mazda Championship – now in its 18th year as one of the most prolific and successful open-wheel driver development series in auto racing today -- is the college basketball, the triple-A baseball, the Junior A hockey of auto racing, a high-speed training ground for future stars of the sport, such as the most recent American Formula One driver Scott Speed, Indy Car stars Marco Andretti and Graham Rahal and prototype phenom Colin Braun as well as the newest addition to Michael Waltrip's NASCAR Sprint Cup team, Michael McDowell, who won the 2005 Star Mazda Championship.

For more mature drivers in whom the competitive fire still burns brightly, the Star Mazda Championship provides a high-profile stage in the form of the Expert (drivers 30 to 44 years old) and Master Series (drivers 45 and older). Expert and Master drivers compete for points and prize money right along with the young hotshoes, but are also competing among themselves for a place on the podium with the top-3 finishers as well as their own year-end championship.

All of the drivers will be starting the season on an unusually level playing field due to technical changes that took place during the off-season. The basic format remains the same – all drivers compete in identical high-tech open-wheel cars with a carbon fiber chassis, fully-adjustable 'pushrod' suspension, and 6-speed sequential gearbox. Power is provided by Mazda's legendary 'Renesis' rotary engine that produces 240 horsepower, top speeds of over 160 mph and 0 to 60 mph acceleration of 2.8 seconds.

But new for 2008 are standing starts (like Formula One races), a new wings that increase top speed by 10 mph on tracks with long straights (like Sebring) and an all-new Goodyear radial racing tire designed specifically for the Star Mazda Championship cars. This last factor will be the greatest 'equalizer' as the new tires completely change the 'setup' (spring rates, shock absorber settings, etc.) of the car from what has been used in previous years. Teams and drivers will be getting their first experience with the new tire at Sebring, and those best able to adapt and find the right setup quickly will have a major advantage in the early races of the season.

The Men Behind the Wheel

JDC Motorsports won the Star Mazda Championship with Dane Cameron in 2007. Their lineup includes returning driver Nick Hays of Hollywood, California, who scored two podium finishes, four top-5s and

finished 4th in the 2007 championship, making him a top contender in his second year racing with sponsorship from QuantumSphere, All*Star Ice, Financial Strategies Group and THINK together.

His new teammate for 2008 is the 2007 Skip Barber Series champion, Joel Miller, who dominated with 5 wins and 10 podiums in 14 races and moves up to the Star Mazda Championship with a full-season sponsorship from the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Development Ladder.

Representing JDC in the Expert Series will be long-time open-wheel racer Gerry Kraut, co-owner of JDC Motorsports, who scored four class wins in 2007 on his way to a 3rd-place finish in the Master Series Championship. He will race the #55 Dougherty & Co. LLC and Dougherty Funding Star Mazda. His new Master Series teammate is Chuck Hulse, the owner of an electronics recycling company called Silicon Salvage who has raced both sprint and stock cars in addition to running five Star Mazda Championship races in 2007.

Andersen Racing is one of the largest and most diverse teams competing in the Star Mazda Championship and is the official development team for Rahal Letterman Racing. They just bought their own test facility/racetrack, Andersen RacePark, in Palmetto, Florida and have formed a motorsports marketing partnership with Allied Building Products, an \$1.8 billion building material distribution company with over 3,500 employees and more than 200 branches in 30 states.

Andersen Racing will field a 4-car Star Mazda team of young drivers, including 19 year-old Yannick Hofman from Quebec, Canada. Hoffman won the Skip Barber Race Series Championship in 2005, finished 7th in the 2007 Formula BMW series championship and also ran two Star Mazda Championship events with Andersen racing, impressing with a 5th-place finish in his first-ever race on the difficult street circuit in his home province of Trois-Rivières, Quebec. He will race the #00 car with sponsorship from Jig-A-Loo, a unique spray-on lubricant that also repels water and fights rust and ice.

The second member of the Andersen Racing squad for 2008 is 16 year-old Tom Gladdis, a British driver who was born on the Isle of Wight and lives on the island of Gibraltar. He is a rookie to racing with just one season under his belt, during which he finished 6th in the extremely competitive Formula BMW UK series. He will race the #5 car with sponsorship from Marrache & Co., the international law firm of Gibraltar, with offices in London, Spain, Lisbon, Prague and Luxemburg.

The team's newest driver is Irish racer Peter Dempsey, a Dunlop/Motorsport Ireland Young Driver of the Year finalist in 2007. He finished third in the British Formula Ford Duratec Championship in 2006 and won the British Formula Ford 1600 Championship in 2005, winning 33 out of 43 races. He won Europe's prestigious Leinster Trophy in 2007, along with the BRDC Golden Helmet, Martin Donnelly Trophy and the Walter Hayes Trophy. He will drive the #21 Andersen Racing Star Mazda.

Andersen Racing's fourth driver is a young lady named Juliana Gonzalez Bermudez, more about whom in a moment.

The Mundill team will run five drivers full-time in 2008, including returning race winner Alex Ardoin, a Louisiana native who scored his first, well-deserved victory in the final race of the 2007 season at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. He finished 6th in the championship with a record of one win, two podiums and four top-10 finishes. His flamboyant driving style thrills the fans and makes him a top contender for the

2008 championship and he will drive the #51 car with sponsorship from Oral and Facial Surgery Centers. Also driving for Mundill will be Scott Rettich (#17), a college business management major who is also a national karting champion and Formula Mazda champion who scored six top-10 finishes in the 2007 Star Mazda Championship.

New to the Mundill team is a pair of fast young Brazilians, Caio Lara (#19) and Carlos Henrique (Rick) Rosin, making their U.S. racing debut in the Star Mazda Championship. Lara is a karting champion who switched to open-wheel racing in 2007 and scored ten podium finishes in a row in the Brazilian Formula Ford series. Rosin started karting at age 9, winning multiple championships before he graduated to racing in the Brazilian Formula Renault championship in 2005- 2006. The team will also field two Expert Series drivers including Mundill co-owner Dave Mundy (#52) and Keith Young, a Chevrolet dealer from Dallas Texas with a long history of SCCA club racing and several seasons of regional Formula Mazda racing.

World Speed Motorsports won the 2006 Star Mazda Championship with Adrian Carrio and return for 2008 with a trio that includes Eric Freiberg, a college student and karting champion who made the switch to open-wheel racing in 2005, ran the SCCA Formula Mazda series in 2006 and finished 11th in the 2007 Star Mazda Championship with five top-10 finishes. He will race the #14 car with sponsorship from CDE Collision Damage Experts, Racing for Kids and Enterprise Rent A Car.

Joining him on the World Speed squad will be 17 year-old Taylor Hacquard, a karting standout who did a full season of testing with the World Speed team in 2007 before making his Star Mazda Championship debut in 2008. He will race the #90 car with sponsorship from the Wolf Auto Group. Rounding out the team will be Expert Series racer Chris Cumming, who won the 2007 Star Mazda West Coast Championship. He will race the #26 car with sponsorship from Inviro Medical.

The Women Behind the Wheel

While female racing drivers are not the jaw-dropping novelty they were in past years, there are still relatively few in open-wheel racing and the Star Mazda Championship is pleased to have at least two running in 2008. Driving for Andersen Racing is Juliana Gonzalez Bermudez, a 16 year-old student/racing car driver who was born in Columbia and lives in Mexico City. She started racing karts in 2002, and won several Mexican national championships before switching to open-wheel cars in 2005. She ran two very successful seasons in the FF2000 series in 2006-2007 and will be a prime contender for the Star Mazda Championship 'Rookie of the Year' honors in 2008. Also notable competitors, though not actually behind the wheel, are Michelle Kish, Team Administrator for Andersen Racing and Team Manager of the Andersen Racing Star Mazda Championship effort and Kate Gundlach, data engineer and crew member of John Walko Racing.

The other female driver currently confirmed for the 2008 Star Mazda Championship season is Kristy Kester, a 19 year-old sophomore Biomedical Science major at Texas A&M. Her resume includes six years of karting and the Formula Enterprise series, where she compiled a record of 3 poles, 2 wins, 3 fastest laps, and numerous top-3 finishes. She will have her brother, J.C. Kester, as a teammate when Kester Racing makes its debut at Sebring. She will drive the #48 Kester Racing entry.

The Family Teams

Kester Racing is one of several family-owned teams competing in the Star Mazda Championship and has the unique distinction of a brother/sister driver lineup. Joining Kristy Kester on the grid at Sebring will be her brother, J.C. Kester, who has seven years of kart racing under his belt, including two IKF regional championships and two IKF national road racing championships. He was class valedictorian at Grandfalls-royalty High School and is currently majoring in manufacturing and mechanical engineering at Texas A&M University. He will drive the #48 Kester Racing car.

Also a family team is Goshen Racing, which will field a car in 2008 for Billy Goshen, the 2007 Formula TR Pro Series 2.0-Liter champion, a title previously held by such racing notables (and Star Mazda graduates) as Marco Andretti, Michael McDowell and Colin Braun. Goshen also won the 2007 West Coast Star Mazda Winter Series with one win, one pole and five podium finishes. His background includes three national karting championships and he is widely considered to be one of the top up-and-coming open-wheel drivers.

And perhaps the most unique team of all in competing in the Star Mazda Championship is the Father/Son racing duo of Master Series driver Dan Tomlin Jr. -- who scored two class wins and seven podium finishes last season -- and Dan Tomlin III, who scored three class wins and four podium finishes on his way to winning the 2007 Expert Series championship. This intensely competitive duo are immediately recognizable on track in their distinctive yellow and orange Team Tomlin cars, #58 for the father because that's how old he was when he started racing, and #56 for the son. When the helmets come off, they are business partners in one of the largest real estate development firms in Texas.

The Race

Round One of the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear begins with promoter test days on Monday, March 10 and Tuesday, March 11. Official practice begins on Wednesday, March 12. Qualifying to set the grid for the start of the race takes place from 1:20 pm to 2:05 pm Thursday, March 13. The 45-minute race 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.

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.