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EDWARDS' MARCH TO THE FRONT HIGHLIGHTS A SEE-SAW BATTLE FOR SUPREMACY DURING STAR MAZDA PRACTICE AT MILLER MOTORSPORTS PARK

Newcomer John Michael Edwards, the 2007 Atlantic Series racer who joined the 2008 Star Mazda Championship just in time for Round Two at Miller Motorsports Park this weekend, completed his march to the top of the time sheets during the two official practice sessions on Friday, May 16.

His climb began with a 9th-fast time in the first session of yesterday's promoter test day, improving to 6th-fast in the second session and up to 4th in the final session of the afternoon. In the morning session on Friday, he moved up to 2nd. And, in the final practice session in the afternoon, under conditions similar to those expected for tomorrow's race, he turned the fastest lap of the session, a 1:45.526 (103.982 mph) in the #7 AIM Autosport Mazda.

"Pretty good result, especially since I couldn't be at the series test here last week and we only had thirty miles of shakedown testing on the car at a completely different track before we started running Thursday morning," says Edwards. "This is the best car we've had all weekend because it feels really stable even when the track gets greasy in the afternoon. There are a lot of factors that can affect qualifying, traffic, a yellow flag at just the wrong time, but we're feeling confident about our chances."

It should be noted that Rocket Rookie Joel Miller, winner of the season-opener in Sebring and the pace-setter at Miller in virtually every test session, was just .156-seconds off the pace, turning a lap of 1:45.682 (103.828 mph) in the #20 JDC Motorsports/MAZDASPEED/K&N Air Filters Mazda. Also occupying the top of the time sheet several times during the afternoon session was Tom Gladdis, who finished 3rd at Sebring and ultimately wound up 3rd-fast in the final Miller test session with a lap of 1:45.843 (103.671 mph) in the #5 Andersen Racing, Law firm of Marrache & Co./Allied Mazda.

In 4th during the heat of the afternoon was Irishman Peter Dempsey, with a lap of 1:45.938 (103.578 mph) in the #21 Andersen Racing/Allied Mazda. Dempsey was fastest in the morning session with a lap of 1:45.021 (104.482 mph), more than half a second faster than the best time of the afternoon and an interesting indicator of the effect that the sun's heat has on lap times at the Miller Motorsports Park track.

Rounding out the top-5, and at the sharp end of the grid throughout testing, was Charles Hall, with a lap of 1:45.975 (103.541 mph) in the #77 Andersen Racing / Pardoes Solicitors/Allied Mazda.

Performances of note include the uniquely-named Cody Jolly, a karting phenom making his Star Mazda debut at Miller. His lap of 1:46.472 (103.058 mph) in the #4 JDC Motorsports Mazda was good for 8th in the final session... an achievement very nearly

on par with Edwards', especially considering Jolly went almost directly from karts to Star Mazda, with just a few Skip Barber regional races in between.

"This is my first real race car," says Jolly. "I've never driven on slicks before, but a Star Mazda car handles quite a bit like a kart, which is good for me. I love being in this program, but I really have to find more sponsorship if I'm going to continue."

And Chuck Hulse, the Master Series (for drivers 45 and older) racer who won his class in at Sebring, was 11th with a lap of 1:46.868 (102.676 mph) in the #12 JDC Motorsports/Silicon Salvage Mazda.

Round Two of the 2008 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear will take place at Miller Motorsports Park May 15 – 17. The inaugural event in 2006 was won from the pole by Adrian Carrio, who took the checkered flag 4.153 seconds ahead of second place finisher Ron White... and went on to win the championship with just two wins to White's three victories. In 2007, Lorenzo Mandarino scored one of his two victories at Miller, on his way to 8th in the championship.

In 2008, competition will take place on the 3.048-mile 'outer course.' Qualifying is scheduled to take place 9:25 – 10:10 am Saturday, May 17, with the 45-minute Round Two of the 2008 Star Mazda Championship taking the green flag at 4:15 pm that afternoon. The race will be broadcast on SPEED Saturday, May 31 at 3:00 pm Eastern.

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.

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

www.champcaratlantic.com

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