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A DOMINANT PERFORMANCE FROM THE CINCINNATI KID – JOHN EDWARDS CRUISES TO MILLER WIN FROM THE POLE BY 14.5 SECONDS

Joel Miller's dominant win at the 2008 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear season-opener at Sebring seems a distant memory in the heat of the Utah afternoon as newcomer John Edwards and the AIM Autosport team celebrate a clean sweep of Round Two at Miller Motorsports Park with the pole, leading every lap, and a 14.514-second margin of victory over 2nd-place finisher Charles Hall and a 22.136-seconds gap back to Miller in 3rd.

Rounding out the top-5 were Irishman Peter Dempsey, who started 5th and finished 4th in the #21 Andersen Racing/Center Jewellers.ie/Quayside.ie/Allied Mazda and Tom Gladdis who qualified 4th and drove the #5 Andersen Racing/Law firm of Marrache & Co./Allied Mazda to a 5th-place finish.

Combined with the results from the Sebring, Joel Miller continues to lead the driver championship battle with 82 points, Hall is in second with 80, Dempsey is third with 71 and Gladdis is fourth with 64.

The race opened with a bit of drama; after a textbook standing start, the 29-car field barreled into Turn One at top speed... and 23 cars emerged. The carnage claimed JDC Motorsports driver Cody Jolly and Mundill's Ciao Lara among others, while several of the wounded were able to make repairs and return to battle. The re-start was not without controversy either, as Edwards' #7 AIM Autosport Mazda and Miller's #20 JDC Motorsports/Mazda/K&N Air Filters Mazda appeared to touch wheels heading into the first turn, an incident that worked out well for Edwards and less so for Miller who lost several places in the process of sliding wide on the exit.

"Joel gave me a good run for my money, but I was able to make a somewhat brave move on the outside of Turn One and make it stick, which was the defining moment of the race for me," says Edwards, now a resident of Cincinnati, Ohio. "He had a better start, and a better re-start, but I was on newer tires and when I drafted past him to take the lead, it was just a matter of driving smooth and bringing it home. The AIM team did a remarkable job in a really short amount of time and I'm delighted to be able to respond with a win in my first race."

Hall, who also finished 2nd at Sebring, qualified 6th in the #77 Andersen Racing/Blimpie/AccentBanking.com/ Pardoes Solicitors/Allied Mazda. His race was a relatively calm affair, once he made it through the first turn melee.

"I didn't qualify where I would have liked, but I got a good start and was able to work my way up to third," said Hall, who was close to signing a Formula One testing contract before a serious accident in a street car derailed his career and put him in physical therapy for a year. "I saw the fight up front and knew from Sebring that Joel was a clean racer, so I thought I wait and see how it sorted itself out. The team gave me a really

good car for the race, and it was a good clean race with no problems, but there was just no catching Edwards today.”

Miller’s slide back through the field to as deep as 9th was the result of a temperature spike in his car’s on-board data system that required some consultation with the team to determine if the problem was serious enough to pit, or if he could continue.

“I drove most of the race with a big red warning light on my dashboard, but the team said to stay out and go for it, so I did,” said the 2007 Skip Barber Pro Series Champion who won his 2008 Star Mazda ride courtesy of the *MAZDASPEED* Motorsports Driver Development Program. “I don’t know if John and I made contact on the re-start, I guess we’ll look at the tapes in slow motion and see, but the JDC team and my engineer Rick Cameron gave me such a good car that I was able to drive back up through the field to finish on the podium and keep me leading the championship.”

Phil Fogg, Jr., of Portland, Oregon, won the Expert Series class (for drivers 30 to 44 years old) in his #29 Northwest Autosport/Consonus Health Services Mazda; he finished 11th overall after qualifying 18th.

“It was a rough qualifying for us, but we lost a couple of other Expert Series drivers in the first-turn incident and that moved me up the field,” said Fogg. “I had a great car in the race that drove like it was on rails until the last couple of laps, but Goodyear did such a good job with these new radial tires that I was running faster laps in the race than I did in qualifying. I’m happy with the result and happy for the Northwest Autosport team.”

The winner of the Master Series class was Gerry Kraut, driver of the #55 JDC Motorsports/Dougherty & Co./Dougherty Funding Mazda. Kraut is a co-owner of JDC, which won the 2007 Star Mazda Championship with Dane Cameron. He qualified 20th and moved up to finish 17th overall.

“I thought my race was all over in Turn One when I managed to dodge two spinning cars but then got rammed from behind,” said the North Oaks, Minnesota resident. “One of my rear tires got cut in the incident and the car was bent so bad it was practically going down the track sideways, but the team said ‘keep going’ so I hammered it as hard as I could. This is a really physical track and there’s hardly time to take a breath during the race, but I feel pretty good right now. I’m just sorry that my JDC teammate and fellow Master Series competitor Chuck Hulse had a suspension failure because he had a great race going.”

One of the most impressive, and unfortunately unnoticed, drives of the race was put on by Louisiana native Alex Ardoin, who won the 2007 Star Mazda Championship season-ender at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. He suffered through an on-board fire in the first day of practice, a cracked chassis that necessitated re-building the whole car on the second day, and started the race dead last, in 29th place. Showing that his victory last season was no fluke, Ardoin drove his #51 Mundill / Oral & Facial Surgery Center/Twister Trailer Mazda to a 10th-place finish and 5th-place in the driver championship battle.

Other notable performances included Jonny Baker, who drove for the Andersen Racing team full-time in the Star Mazda series last year and stepped into the #11 Andersen Racing/Allied Mazda at the last minute with no preparation and brought the car home in

12th. Of the two female drivers in the race, Kristy Kester of College Station, Texas fared the best, qualifying 21st in her #48 Kester Racing/Texas World Speedway/Unifirst Mazda and finishing 18th. She is currently 10th in the points championship. Michele Bumgarner of Manila, Philippines, qualified 24th and finished 20th in the #33 John Walko Racing/Spectrum-OSO Asia/Oakley/Philippines Department of Tourism Mazda. Perhaps the most unfortunate outcome of the weekend was that of JDC driver Cody Jolly, a karting champion who came almost directly to his first Star Mazda start via a couple of Skip Barber regional races. In his first drive in a real race car on Goodyear racing slicks, he showed surprising speed in practice only to suffer an electrical engine misfire in qualifying that relegated him to 28th on the grid, putting him in ideal position to be taken out in the first-turn incident.

In the Master Series points battle, JDC teammates Gerry Kraut and Chuck Hulse are tied with 36, while Expert Series winner at Sebring, Chris Cumming, continues to lead with 34 points after a 15th overall, 2nd in class finish at Miller. Andersen Racing is leading the team championship with 64 points, followed by JDC Motorsports in 2nd with 55, World Speed Motorsports in 3rd with 39, Mundill in 4th with 34 and Goshen Motorsports in 5th with 28 points.

All the action of Round Two of the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear at Miller Motorsports Park can be seen on the SPEED TV broadcast scheduled for Saturday, May 31 and 3:00 pm Eastern.

The next event, Round Three on the 12-race 2008 schedule, will take place June 7 at Watkins Glen International. This will be the Star Mazda Championship's first visit to this legendary track and will take place during the Grand-Am Sahlen's Six Hours of the Glen weekend.

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.

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