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-- THE USUAL SUSPECTS, QUICK AS USUAL --

**Familiar names top the time sheets in Thursday testing at PIR
prior to this weekend's Mazda Grand Prix of Portland**

Under blue skies and temperatures in the mid-70s, the drivers of the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear took to the track for a day of testing prior to headlining this weekend's Mazda Grand Prix of Portland.

In the morning 40-minute session, top time was set by Charles Hall, winner of Round 3 at Watkins Glen and the current championship points leader. His lap of 1:10.802 (100.523 mph) in the #77 Andersen Racing / Blimpie / Pardoes Solicitors / Allied Mazda was 0.222 seconds clear of the second-fastest car on the track, the #7 AIM Autosports Mazda of John Edwards. After a dominant win from the pole in Round 2 at Miller Motorsports Park, Edwards has been one of the front-runners and his fastest lap in the morning was 1:11.024 (100.208 mph). Third on the morning time sheet was Watkins Glen pole-sitter (and winner of 2007 Star Mazda season-ender at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca), Alex Ardoin. He turned a lap of 1:11.104 (100.096 mph) in the #51 Mundill/Oral&Facial Surgery Center/Twister Trailer Mazda.

Rounding out the top-5 were Billy Goshen, who set the 4th-fast lap of 1:11.256 (99.882 mph) in the #82 Goshen Racing/ Merv Griffin Entertainment / Global Tracking Comm. Mazda and Tom Gladdis, driving the #5 Andersen Racing/ Law firm of Marrache & Co. / Allied. His lap of 1:11.285 (99.841 mph) was 5th-fast in the morning session.

Among the Expert Series drivers (age 30 to 44), Portland native Phil Fogg, Jr., who was 6th fast overall in the #29 Northwest Autosport/Consonus Health Services Mazda with a lap of 1:11.439 (99.626 mph). The quickest Master Series driver (45 and older) was Gerry Kraut was 9th-fast overall with a lap of 1:12.351 (98.759 mph) in the #55 Motorsports / Dougherty & Co. / Dougherty Funding LLC. Mazda.

Times dropped almost one second in the afternoon session – still under idyllic conditions - as the track got dusted off, a little rubber was laid down and drivers started to get the rhythm. John Edwards moved from 2nd on the time sheet to the top slot with a 1:09.953 (101.743 mph) but Tom Gladdis made a big jump from 5th in the morning to 2nd in the afternoon with a lap of 1:10.448 (101.028 mph). Sebring winner Joel Miller, the 2007 Skip Barber Pro Series champion who won his 2008 Star Mazda ride courtesy of the *MAZDASPEED* Motorsports Driver Development Ladder, could do no better than 12th fast in the morning session, but found the setup in the afternoon and turned a 3rd-fast lap of 1:10.579 (100.840 mph) in the #20 JDC Motorsports / Mazda / K& N Air Filter Mazda. Charles Hall was 4th fast with a lap of 1:10.628 (100.770 mph) and Alex Ardoin turned a 1:10.643 (100.749 mph), good for 5th fast on the time sheet.

Phil Fogg, Jr. was again the quickest Expert, 10th overall with a lap of 1:11.422 (99.650 mph), but Gerry Kraut's JDC Motorsports teammate moved up to the fastest Master Series driver (and 18th fast overall) with a lap of 1:12.137 (98.662 mph) in the #12 JDC Motorsports/Silicon Salvage Mazda.

Among the three female drivers in the 30-car field, Michelle Bumgarner of the Philippines was fastest in the morning session with a lap of 1:12.593 (98.043 mph) in the #43 John Walko Racing/Philippines Dept. of Tourism Mazda. In the afternoon, Kristy Kester, the distaff half of the brother/sister Kester Racing team, was the quickest female racer with a lap of 1:11.657 (99.323 mph) in the #48 Kester Racing / Texas World Speedway / Unifirst Mazda.

Making a notable debut with a 10th-fast time in the morning session was Rusty Mitchell, a karting and Pro SCCA formula racing champion making his first foray into the ultra-competitive world of the Star Mazda Championship. Driving the #22 Mitchell Racing/Motorola Mazda, Mitchell turned a lap of 1:12.236 (98.527 mph). He went faster in the afternoon (1:11.888 / 99.004 mph), but so did everyone else, so he was scored 16th fast in the second session.

The Mazda Grand Prix of Portland at Portland International Raceway, July 25 – 27, is a 'double-header' weekend with two qualifying sessions and two races. On track activities begin with a Promoter test day on July 24, followed by official practice on July 25. Qualifying for the first race (Round Four) will take place 10:00 to 10:45 am Saturday, July 26, with the race scheduled to take the green flag at 2:00 pm (all times are West Coast). Qualifying and race two (Round Five) take place at precisely the same times on Sunday, July 27. The races will be broadcast on SPEED, on August 9, Round four at 12 noon (ET) and round 5 at 1:00 pm (TV times are Eastern Time).

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. For interviews, photos, etc., contact Star Mazda Championship Communications Director Peter Frey at (818) 906-6997 / 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

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