



PETER DEMPSEY TOPS TIME SHEETS IN DRAMATIC FRIDAY AFTERNOON STAR MAZDA PRACTICE SESSION AT THE GP3R



As lacking in drama as the first Star Mazda Championship practice session of the day was, the second session more than made up for it. Charles Hall, who set the fastest time in the morning knocked a corner off his #77 Andersen Racing / Blimpie / AccentBanking.com/ Allied Building Products

Mazda on the first lap and found himself demoted to 19th in the session. The new leader, Irishman Peter Dempsey, who was third-fast in the morning session, made a blazing impression by setting a fast afternoon lap of 1:02.650 (87.400 mph) and then pulling into the pits about halfway through the session with his #21 Andersen Racing / LotusWorks/ Allied Building Products Mazda on fire. Alert Star Mazda Competition Director Ron Roland helped extricate Dempsey, who won the previous event – Round 6 at Road America -- and the minor fire, probably started by track debris thrown up on the exhaust header, was quickly extinguished.

Second –fast in the session was John Edwards in the #7 AIM Autosport Mazda with a lap of 1:02.935 (87.004 mph), approximately 4/10ths faster than his morning time. Edwards, who was fourth-fast in the morning session, is the only two-time winner so far this season with victories in his debut race from the pole at Miller Motorsports Park and in Race 2/Round 5 at the Mazda Grand Prix of Portland. And although he was slightly faster in the morning session, Louisiana racer Alex Ardoin moved up the time sheets in the afternoon with a 3rd-fastest lap of 1:03.517 (86.207 mph) in the #51 Mundill Racing / Oral & Facial Surgery Center / Twister Trailer Mazda.

Rounding out the top-5 were Ernesto Otero, making big gains from his 14th-place in the morning times up to 4th in the afternoon with a lap of 1:03.660 (86.013 mph) in the #18 JDC Motorsports / Brazilian Green Beef Mazda. In 5th was Joel Miller, down from 2nd in the morning session having lost half a second somewhere between morning and afternoon. His lap of 1:03.669 (86.001 mph) in the #20 JDC Motorsports / Mazda / K&N Air Filters Mazda was 5th-fast in the second session.

Also making good gains in the afternoon were Billy Goshen, driver of the #82 Goshen Motorsports / Merv Griffin Entertainment / Global Tracking Communications Mazda who moved up from 11th to 7th with a lap of 1:03.962 (85.607 mph). While Kristy Kester was the fastest of the two female drivers in the field in the morning session, Polish racer Natalia Kowalska moved ahead in the afternoon, setting the 12th-fast time of 1:04.405 (85.018 mph) in the #34 Andersen Racing / Natan Developments Mazda.

As he was in the morning session, Vancouver racer Chris Cumming was the quickest Expert Series driver (ages 30 – 44) driver in the field. He is the current leader in the Expert championship battle with four class wins, including back-to-back victories in Portland and his lap of 1:04.232 (85.247 mph) was good for 10th fast in the session. The fastest Master Series driver (age 45 and older) is current Master Series points leader Chuck Hulse. His lap of 1:04.967 (84.283 mph) in the #12 JDC Motorsports / Silicon Salvage Mazda was good for 15th on the time sheet.

A 45-minute qualifying session, split into two groups according to practice times, will be held from 10:00 to 10:45 am, Saturday, August 16. Each group will get 22 ½-minutes of track time. The 55-minute race, Round 7 of the 2008 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear, scheduled to take the green flag at 11:15 am Sunday, August 17. The race will be broadcast on SPEED TV at 12 noon (ET), Saturday, August 30.

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.

