



'FIREBALL' DEMPSEY DOES IT AGAIN – WINS STAR MAZDA POLE AT GP3R



Having earned the nickname 'Fireball' in Thursday's final practice session when he first set the fastest lap and then had his car catch on fire, Irishman Peter Dempsey – winner of the last race, Round 5 at Road America, won the pole for the start of tomorrow's Round 6 of the 2008 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear. His lap of 1:01.788 (88.619 mph) in the #21 Andersen Racing / LotusWorks/Allied Building Products Mazda was a new track record, eclipsing the previous record of 1:02.106 set by Ryan Justice in 2006.

The time was just 0.148 seconds clear of American John Edwards, who will start next to Dempsey on the front row in the #7 AIM Autosport Mazda with a lap of 1:01.936 (88.407 mph). Edwards is the only two-race winner so far this season, from the pole in his first-ever Star Mazda Championship race at Miller Motorsports Park and again in Race 2, Round 5 at the Mazda Grand Prix of Portland.

"I'm not too sure about the nickname 'Fireball,' but I'm happy to be turning some hot laps for Andersen Racing and my sponsors," said Dempsey. "We had a split qualifying session, so traffic wasn't so much of a problem as were the local yellows. The car was handling brilliantly, but every time I got a run going the flags came out. But I finally got one in and when the team told me I was on pole, we decided to park the car with about seven minutes to go in the session and see if anyone could go faster. No one did, so we have a car that's six or seven laps fresher for the race than anyone else. I think it's great for the diversity of the series to have all kinds of different drivers, including me, winning poles and races. Hopefully I can become the series' second two-race winner tomorrow."

Starting third on the grid at the 39th annual GP3R will be Louisiana racer Alex Ardoin, who won the 2007 Star Mazda Championship season-finale at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. So far in 2008 he has won the pole at Watkins Glen, finished on the podium twice and finished 4th twice and sits second in the championship battle. He turned a lap of 1:01.936 (88.370 mph) in the #51 Mundill Racing / Oral & Facial Surgery Center / Twister Trailer Mazda but flat-spotted two tires during the qualifying session. His team is allowed to change one without costing him his

qualifying spot and sending him to the back of the grid, so it will be interesting to see how this plays out in the race.

Rounding out the top-5 are MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder racer Joel Miller in 4th with a lap of 1:03.140 (86.722 mph) in the #20 JDC Motorsports / Mazda / K&N Air Filters Mazda and Brazilian racer Ernesto Otero in 5th with a lap of 1:02.482 (87.635 mph) in the #18 JDC Motorsports / Brazilian Green Beef Mazda. Miller won the season opener at Sebring and was the 2007 Skip Barber Pro Series Champion, which won him his fully-sponsored ride in the Star Mazda Championship courtesy of the Mazda ladder. Miller drives for JDC Motorsports, the team that won the 2007 Star Mazda Championship with Dane Cameron, who is now racing in the Atlantic Championship with sponsorship from the Mazda ladder. Otero, who raced Formula 3 previously, has come to terms with his Star Mazda car in the last four races and finished consistently in the top-8.

As he was in both sessions yesterday, 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 1:02.566 (87.517 mph) – two seconds faster than his best time on Thursday -- will see him starting 6th on the grid. The fastest Master Series driver (age 45 and older) is current Master Series points leader Chuck Hulse. His lap of 1:03.485 (86.250 mph) in the #12 JDC Motorsports / Silicon Salvage Mazda earned him the 14th starting spot. The fastest of the two female racers in the field is Polish racer Natalia Kowalska. Her lap of 1:02.938 (87.000 mph) in the #34 Andersen Racing / Natan Developments Mazda was good for 9th place on the grid.

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.

