



BLAZIN' IN THE GRASS – Star Mazda Championship practice begins at NJMP



Friday, September 12, 2008 / New Jersey Motorsports Park – Practice kicked off today for this weekend's Rounds 9 and 10 of the 2008 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear. With the exception of a few off-course excursions that brought drivers into the pits for the removal of dried grass from their radiator screens – and the occasional rock from their radiator – the first three promoter

test sessions leading up to the start of official weekend activities tomorrow morning went off with only a few minor surprises.

The biggest surprise was provided by the newest member of the Andersen Racing squad, Finnish driver Valle Mäkelä, making his debut among the Star Mazda Championship regulars by setting the third-fastest time of 1:16.864 (105.381 mph) in the #31 Andersen Racing / Amitec / Allied Building Products Mazda. Top time in the first session – 1:16.192 (106.310 mph) was set by American Joel Miller, the 2007 Skip Barber Pro Series champion who won his ride in the #20 JDC Motorsports / Mazda / K&N Air Filters Mazda courtesy of sponsorship provided by the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder. Second-fast was Peter Dempsey, the blazing-hot young Irish driver who won the last three races in a row and turned a 1:16.690 (105.620 mph) in the # 21 #21 Andersen Racing / LotusWorks/ Allied Building Products Mazda.

Rounding out the top-5 in the first session were American John Edwards, the first two-time winner in 2008, with a lap of 1:17.376 (104.684 mph) in the #7 AIM Autosport/Mobil1 Mazda, and Louisiana racer Alex Ardoin, a second-year driver who won the season-ending race in 2007. He set a time of 1:17.434 (104.605 mph) in the #51 Mundill Racing / Oral & Facial Surgery Center / Twister Trailer Mazda.

In the second session, competition sharpened up considerably and the times were much tighter. Peter Dempsey moved to the top of the time sheet with a lap of 1:15.381 (107.454 mph), while Joel Miller posted the second-fastest time of 1:15.389 (107.430 mph) and John Edwards was in third with a 1:15.709 (106.989 mph). Tom Gladdis, who won from the pole at the Mazda Grand Prix of Portland, moved up from 7th in the first session to fourth in the second session with a lap of 1:16.314 (106.140 mph) in the #5 Andersen Racing / Marrache &

Co. / Allied Building Products Mazda. Rounding out the top-5 in the second session was Englishman Charles Hall, who won earlier this season at Watkins Glen. He turned a lap of 1:16.403 (106.017 mph) in the #77 Andersen Racing#77 Andersen Racing / Blimpie / AccentBanking.com/ Allied Building Products Mazda

The final session of the day, accomplished just before the rain that had been threatening all day long finally made good on its promise, saw times slightly slower than the middle session, perhaps due to increasing humidity, perhaps to the amount of dirt and dust accumulating on the track through the course of the day. John Edwards wound up on top with a lap of 1:15.651 (107.071 mph), followed by Charles Hall at a 1:15.766. (106.908 mph) and Peter Dempsey at a 1:15.878 (106.750 mph). Completing the top-5 were Tom Gladdis in fourth, who improved from a 1:16.314 to a 1:15.881 (106.746 mph) and the morning's fast guy, Joel Miller, with a 1:16.095 (106.446 mph).

Throughout the three sessions, the fastest Expert Series driver on track was Vancouver native Chris Cumming. Driving the #16#16 World Speed Motorsports / Inviro Medical Mazda, he turned a 10th-fast 1:18.979 (102.559 mph) in the morning, improved to a 9th-fast overall 1:17.351 (104.717 mph) in the middle session and slipped just slightly to a 1:17.645 (1-04.321 mph) for 10th-fast in the final session.

Master Series racer (and championship leader) Chuck Hulse was improved slightly in the first two sessions, with a 16th-fast 1:19.711 (101.617 mph) in the morning, improving to a 19th-fast 1:19.357 (102.070 mph) during the mid-day session. But he found some real speed for the final outing of the day, turning a 16th-fast overall lap of 1:18.217 (103.558 mph) in the #12 JDC Motorsports / Silicon Salvage Mazda.

There will be two official practice sessions on Saturday morning, September 13, with qualifying for Race 1 taking place from 1:00 pm to 1:45 pm Saturday afternoon. Teams and drivers will have less than two hours to make any final adjustments to the cars before the green flag waves for the first race at 3:30 pm Saturday afternoon. The Sunday schedule is slightly more benevolent, with the 45-minute qualifying session taking place from 9:20 am to 10:05 am and the race scheduled to start at 2:15 pm Sunday, September 14.

Race 1 / Round 9 will air on SPEED TV Sunday, October 5 at 2:00 pm (ET), while Race 2 / Round 10 will be broadcast Sunday, October 12 at 1:00 pm (ET).

This is the first visit of the Star Mazda Championship to New Jersey Motorsports Park. This brand-new facility is located on over 700 acres, conveniently located to Philadelphia, New York and Washington DC, New Jersey Motorsports Park (www.njmotorsportspark.com) offers an incredible amount of diverse and dynamic motorsports attractions. Included in just the first phase of this tremendous facility are: 2 world class road courses (Thunderbolt and Lightning); an exclusive motorsports country club known as the Drivers Club; unique trackside Villa homes, and a first class karting facility where anyone can experience the thrill of motorsports behind the wheel for the first 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

www.starmazda.com

www.skipbarber.com

www.mx-5cup.com

Dean Case / Communications Officer / MAZDASPEED Motorsports
Office - (310) 755-7403 / Cell - (310) 318-4582 / E-mail: dean@RWB-LLC.com

