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-- STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP HEADS TO NEW JERSEY --

Irishman Peter Dempsey is on a hot streak with three wins in a row as the young guns of the Star Mazda Championship head for a double-header at NJMP



Heading into the 2008 season's four-race home stretch that begins with a double-header this weekend at New Jersey Motorsports Park, the battle for supremacy inside the Star Mazda championship presented by Goodyear is a study in contradictions.

Irishman Peter Dempsey, driving the #21 Andersen Racing / LotusWorks/ Allied Building Products Mazda has been red-hot, winning the last three races in a row, yet he is second in the championship – albeit just one point behind – to American Joel Miller who won the season-opener at Sebring from the pole in the #20 JDC Motorsports / Mazda / K&N Air Filters Mazda... but has yet to score a follow-up victory despite four podium finishes.

Miller is the 2007 Skip Barber Pro Series champion who won his sponsored ride in the 2008 Star Mazda Championship courtesy of the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder. 2007 Star Mazda champion Dane Cameron is also racing at NJMP this weekend, driving the #19 Genoa Racing/Mazda/Finlay Motorsports/Lynx Racing Swift 016.a in the Atlantic Championship Powered by Mazda with funding from the MAZDASPEED Ladder program.

Just two points behind Dempsey and three behind Miller is Louisiana racer Alex Ardoin, who is third in the championship battle despite not having won a race and starting from the pole only once. In fact, the top dozen or so drivers in the Star Mazda Championship are all within striking distance of the championship – which says a good deal about how deep this year's talent pool really is – and what happens in the two races taking place this weekend will go a long way toward deciding who's left standing for the final two-race shootout at the Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta (Oct. 1 – 4) and the season-finale Monterey Sports Car Championships at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca (Oct. 16 – 18)... a race, by the way, that the aforementioned Alex Ardoin won last year.

Other race winners so far this season who must be ranked among the favorites at the series' first two-time winner, American John Edwards, who missed the first race, won from the pole in his first-ever Star Mazda Championship race at Miller Motorsports Park driving the #7 AIM Autosport Mazda, and repeated with a victory in Race 2/Round 5 at

the Mazda Grand Prix of Portland. Add in two more podium appearances and a pair of top-6 finishes and Edwards is fifth in the championship, just 22 points back in a series that pays 44 points for a win.

Also playing a starring role at the Mazda Grand Prix of Portland was the youngest driver in the series, 17-year old Tom Gladdis, who hails from the British territory of Gibraltar. Driving the #5 Andersen Racing / Marrache & Co. / Allied Building Products Mazda, Gladdis captured the pole for both races and won Race 1/Round 4.

The other, and perhaps most interesting, driver to win a race this year is Englishman Charles Hall, another member of the Andersen Racing squad. He was on his way to a Formula One career in Europe when an unfortunate encounter with a drunk driver cost him a year in the hospital and thoroughly de-railed his career. He came to the U.S. and the Star Mazda Championship intending to get that career back on track and is doing an admirable job with one win, three podiums and two top-5 finishes to place him fourth in the championship. Keep an eye out for the #77 Andersen Racing / Blimpie / AccentBanking.com/Pardoes Solicitors / Allied Building Products Mazda.

Leading the Expert Series for drivers 30 to 44 years old is Vancouver, B.C. native Chris Cumming. Racing the #16 World Speed Motorsports / Inviro Medical Mazda, he has scored six class wins, regularly finishes in (or around) the top-10 overall and while he leads the Expert championship, he is also 11th in the overall championship. The hottest driver in the Master Series (for drivers 45 and older) is Chuck Hulse. Racing the #12 JDC Motorsports / Silicon Salvage Mazda, he has scored five class wins and three in-class top-3 finishes. He leads the Master Series championship and is 15th in the overall championship.

Of the female racers in the field, Kristy Kester, half of the brother/sister Kester Racing team, is setting the pace. The 19 year-old biomedical science major at Texas A&M scored an impressive 8th-place finish at Sebring in the #48 Kester Racing/Texas World Speedway/Unifirst Mazda. Unable to qualify at Watkins Glen due to a mechanical problem, she started dead last and raced her way to a 12th-place finish. Her record so far includes two top-10 and three top-12 finishes, and she sits 9th in the championship battle.

For the younger drivers on their way up the Motorsports ladder, the Star Mazda Championship – now in its 18th year as one of the most prolific and successful open-wheel driver development series in auto racing today -- is the college basketball, the triple-A baseball, the Junior A hockey of auto racing, a high-speed training ground for future stars of the sport, such as the most recent American Formula One driver Scott Speed, Indy Car stars Marco Andretti and Graham Rahal and the newest addition to Michael Waltrip's NASCAR Sprint Cup team, Michael McDowell, who won the 2004 Star Mazda Championship.

The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear event at New Jersey Motorsports Park is a 'double-header' weekend with two qualifying sessions and two races. On track

activities begin with a Promoter test day on Friday, September 12, followed by two morning practice sessions, qualifying (1:00 to 1:45 pm) and Race 1/Round 9 (3:30 to 4:30 pm), all on Saturday, September 13. Sunday's schedule of events is slightly less hectic, with just qualifying, set for 9:20 to 10:05 am, followed by the race, scheduled to take the green flag at 2:15 pm.

Both races will be broadcast on SPEED. Saturday's Race 1/Round 9 is scheduled to air at 2:00 pm (ET) Sunday, October 5. Race 2/Round 10 is scheduled for 1:00 pm (ET) Sunday, October 12. Times are subject to change without notice, so please check with the SPEED web site at www.speedtv.com/schedule for the latest information.

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

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