



## **RICHARD KENT TOPS THE TIME SHEETS AS THE STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP WRAPS UP TWO DAYS OF TESTING AT SEBRING PRIOR TO THE 2009 SEASON OPENER**

With the start of the 2009 season just three days away, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear wrapped up two days of final testing on Tuesday. With 28 cars taking to the track during four one-hour sessions spread over two days, English Rookie Richard Kent topped the time sheets with a lap of 1:58.989 on lap 11, a new unofficial track record, in the #33 Andersen Racing / Traka / Allied Interior Products Mazda. Star Mazda Championship series rules require official track records to be set during qualifying or the race. The official record of 1:59.986 is held by 2007 series champion Dane Cameron.



Kent, who hails from Birmingham, England, stunned series regulars in the final race of the 2008 season at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca when, in a 1-off appearance for Andersen Racing, he took the pole with a new track record and went on to win the race. Despite this performance, he is still

officially regarded as a 'rookie' since series rules award that status to any driver who has run fewer than three races. Kent is a veteran of both Formula Renault and Palmer Audi racing in Europe.

"Now I just need to be able to do the same thing in qualifying on Thursday," said Kent. "We're definitely not counting our chickens just yet. We're making more and more progress and it's going to be a long week, so we knew on Monday not to be frustrated when we weren't the fastest. I've tested here with the Andersen team, but this will be my first race at Sebring and it's a fantastic circuit with real character. I like the fact that they haven't changed it all around to make it easier, but have left the bumps and pavement changes and all the rest of it in for us to deal with."

Turning the second-fast time in the final session was MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder racer Conor Daly, son of racing legend and two-time 12 Hours of Sebring winner Derek Daly.



Driving the #22 Andersen Racing / College Network / Indeck / Allied Interior Products Mazda, the youngster from Noblesvilli, Indiana turned a 1:59.769 on lap 12 of the session.



Joel Miller, the 2008 MAZDASPEED driver who won last year's Sebring event from the pole by a 6.6-second margin of victory, was third on the Tuesday time sheet with a lap 6 time of 2:00.233 in the #2 JDC Motorsports Mazda. Fourth fast was Brazilian Ciao Lara, who set the fastest time in the final session of the official Star Mazda Championship series test at Sebring a month ago. Driving the #19 JDC Motorsports Mazda, he turned a 2:00.269 (110.752 mph) on lap 12 of the session. Rounding out the top-5 was last-minute entry Joe D'Agostino, who set a time of 2:00.319 in the #5 Andersen Racing / Classic Mazda / Allied Interior Products Mazda.

Star Mazda Championship drivers will have a single official practice session on Wednesday, March 18, from 1:00 pm to 1:40 pm. Qualifying to set the starting grid takes place from 1:45 pm 0 2:30 pm, Thursday, March 19. The 45-minute Round One of the 2009 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear season is set to take the green flag at 3:55 pm, Friday, March 20.

