



SHOOTING STARS AT VIR – MORE THAN 25 CARS EXPECTED FOR ROUND TWO OF THE 2009 THE STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP PRESENTED BY GOODYEAR AT VIR THIS WEEKEND

Fast Facts – Round two of the 2009 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear at the Bosch Engineering 250 at Virginia International Raceway, April 24 – 26

- The Star Mazda Championship is the college basketball of open-wheel racing and is entering its 19th year as one of the premier driver development series in North America. Series graduates – including Marco Andretti and Graham Rahal -- have gone on to race in Grand-Am, F1, Indy Cars and NASCAR.
- A field of 25+ top drivers from around the world will line up for the Star Mazda Championship's F1-style standing start at 1:00 pm Sunday afternoon; countries represented include the U.S., Canada, England, Ireland, Norway, Brazil, Venezuela, Chile and Japan. Three of the top four and seven of the top ten drivers in the 2008 championship have returned to battle again in 2009.
- Conor Daly, son of F1/Indy Car/Sports Car racing legend and two-time 12 Hours of Sebring winner Derek Daly (1990 – 1991) will be in the Star Mazda field and hopes to improve on his podium finish at Round One in Sebring.
- Another racing legend, Eliseo Salazar (like Daly, a veteran of F1, Indy Cars and prototypes) will be looking to ramp up the performance of his brand-new Eliseo THL Motorsports, a Star Mazda team focusing on helping South American drivers launch their North American motorsports careers. They debuted at Sebring with a top-10 result from driver Kevin Toledo.
- The field also includes the unique brother/sister team of J.C. and Kristy Kester as well as eight fast and highly experienced drivers competing in the Expert (ages 30 to 44) and Master (45 and older) series. This race-within-a-race features company CEOs risking it all in wheel-to-wheel battles with fearless teenage hotshoes.
- Star Mazda race cars are even faster for 2009 with upgraded aerodynamics, suspension and engine; top speed is 160 mph and 0 to 60 mph acceleration takes just 2.8 seconds. Prize money up for grabs total \$1.5 million, including a fully-sponsored drive for the series champion in the 2010 Atlantic Championship courtesy of the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder.
- Two Star Mazda Championship teams have 'driver development deals with Indy Racing League teams; Andersen Racing with Rahal Letterman and Kester Racing with Team 3G. The Mundill team recently purchased an ALMS LMP1 prototype and will campaign their Star Mazda drivers in the car later this season and in 2010.

When you have a 25+ field of racing drivers in which three of the top four and seven of the top ten from last year's championship are back to do battle again, you know you have a hot racing series. And so it is with the 2009 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear, now entering its 19th year as one of the premier open-wheel driver development series in the world today with a list of graduates as long as your arm – with Indy Car stars Marco Andretti, Graham Rahal and Raphael Matos, along with NASCAR driver Michael McDowell, Grand Am Rolex Series racers Guy Cosmo, Brad Jaeger among the most recent.

Round Two of the 2009 Star Mazda Championship season is scheduled to take the green flag at 1:00 pm Sunday as part of the Grand Am Rolex Sports Car Series Bosch Engineering 250 at Virginia International Raceway. The Star Mazda Championship has made only one previous visit to VIR, in 2007. Dane Cameron, driving for the JDC Motorsports team, won the race and went on to win the championship.

The Drivers

While one race is thin data on which to build any trends or predictions, Round One, at the 12 Hours of Sebring on March 20, did get the 2009 Star Mazda Championship season off to a dramatic start. After dominating pre-season testing driving a car prepared by Andersen Racing, Englishman Adam Christodoulou surprised everyone by signing instead with JDC Motorsports. Starting from the outside of the front row, he drove a flawless race on the way to victory in the #11 JDC Motorsports Mazda.

Also finishing on the podium was pole-sitter Richard Kent, another Englishman, driving the #33 Andersen Racing / Traka / Allied Interior Products Mazda. Kent was the 'man from nowhere' who entered only one race last season, the finale at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, then proceeded to set a new track record in winning the pole in qualifying and leading every lap of the race. And while Brazilian driver Caio Lara in the #19 JDC Motorsports Mazda finished third on the track and participated in the podium ceremony, a post-race review of the videotapes showed a driving infraction that cause officials to penalize him a place, dropping him to fourth. , and elevating to the final, official top-3 another interesting rookie, Conor Daly, son of racing legend and motorsports broadcaster Derek Daly. Daly is the 2008 Skip Barber Pro Series champion and races the #22 Andersen Racing / College Network / Indeck / Cytomax Mazda with sponsorship from the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder.

Completing the 5-person Star Mazda Championship podium at Sebring were the top-finishing Expert Series (ages 30 – 44) driver, the 2008 Expert Series champion, Chris Cumming of Vancouver, B.C. He drove the #16 Kester Racing Team 3G / Texas World Speedway / Motul Oil Mazda to a 14th-place finish overall. Californian Mike Guasch won the Master Series (45 and older) driving the #91 JDC Motorsports / Molecule Labs Mazda.

Other top contenders at VIR include Californian Joel Miller, who won the season opener at Sebring from the pole in 2008 on his way to finishing second in the championship. He finished 5th at Sebring this year driving the #2 JDC Motorsports Mazda. Irishman Peter Dempsey, who

won four races during the 2008 Star Mazda Championship and finished third in the championship, weathered a difficult weekend with his new team to qualify 5th and finish 6th in the #3 AIM Autosport / Motorsport Ireland / Queyside.ie Mazda. Joe D'Agostino, a last-moment entry driving with sponsorship from Classic Mazda in Orlando, Florida, qualified 11th on the starting grid in his #5 Andersen Racing / Classic Mazda machine and finished 7th.

Alex Ardoin, the only driver currently competing in the series who drove in the 2007 event, finishing 11th. At Sebring, Ardoin, now in his third season of Star Mazda competition, qualified 4th in the #51 JDC Motorsports / Oral & Facial Surgery Center Mazda, but with an aggressive start found himself leading the first three laps. Officials determined the start was perhaps a bit too aggressive and awarded him a 'drive-through' penalty that dropped him to the very back of the 28-car pack. By lap 20, however, the racer from Lafayette, Louisiana worked his way back up to 8th. 17 year-old Venezuelan Jorge Goncalvez, moving up from Formula BMW made a good showing, finishing 9th in the #72 AIM Autosport / Mazda and Chilean rookie Kevin Toledo, driving for the newly-announced Eliseo THL Motorsports team headed by racing legend Eliseo Salazar, scored a top-10 finish driving the #77 Eliseo THL Mazda.

The Cars

In the first major upgrade of the Star Mazda 'Pro Car' since its introduction five years ago, Star Race Cars has produced a package of mechanical and software upgrades for the 2009 season. The upgrades, including new wings, shock absorbers and suspension rockers, are designed to increase the car's aerodynamic efficiency and top speed while improving engine cooling; in addition, it will be easier for drivers and their engineers to arrive at the best setup for each track. The cumulative effect of the upgrades will be to increase both top speed and cornering speed, reduce maintenance costs and enhance the mechanical reliability of what is arguably already one of the most dependable, cost-effective open-wheel cars in competition today.

MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder

Up-and-coming race drivers have two major challenges: winning on the track, and finding the resources to move up to the next level. Mazda in conjunction with series corporate partners is making the second task significantly easier for this year's champion drivers. Mazda will provide a next-level, fully-funded ride in a Mazda powered car to the 2009 champions of selected Mazda series.

Open-wheel racers are competing for these awards in 2009:

- One successful kart racer will participate in a full season of the BFGoodrich Skip Barber National Presented by Mazda in 2010.
- The 2009 Skip Barber National Champion will be racing in the 2010 Star Mazda Championship Presented by Goodyear.
- The 2009 Star Mazda Champion will be racing in the 2010 Cooper Tires Presents the Atlantic Series Powered by Mazda.

Over the past decade, Mazda has developed an increasingly strong presence at road racing tracks around the nation. At the 2009 Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring festivities, Mazda is represented in five of the eight races, and six of the thirteen different classes of cars, more than any other brand including Porsche, Ferrari, General Motors, Ford, Dodge, Toyota and Honda.

Mazda is the brand of choice for road-racers across North America. More than 9,000 grassroots racers compete in various classes with the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) and the National Auto Sport Association (NASA). Racers who are years away from earning a driver's license can now begin their professional motorsports careers in the Mazda family. A driver can begin in karts and progress through the Skip Barber series, Club Racing Formula Mazda, professional Star Mazda and finally to Formula Atlantic, all with Mazda. No other car company has ever connected the dots this way.

The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear

For 2009, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear will feature an 11-weekend, 13-race schedule on major race weekends with American Le Mans, Grand-Am, the Atlantic Championship, NASCAR Nationwide and Craftsman Truck Series. Prize money is \$1.5 million, including a fully-funded drive in the 2010 Atlantic Championship. Drivers 16 and older are welcome to compete and the Star Mazda Championship also features Expert (30 to 44) and Master (45 and older) classes for more mature racers. The Star Mazda Championship features standing starts, wheel-to-wheel racing at 150 mph and budgets a fraction of other top open-wheel ladder series. iRacing.com is the official racing simulation of the Star Mazda Championship, and one-month free 'virtual test drive' of the Star Mazda open-wheel car is available by going to www.starmazda.com/newdriver.

VIR Schedule

Star Mazda Championship action at VIR begins with a 'promoter test day' on Thursday, April 23. Official practice continues with two sessions on Friday, April 24, with qualifying to set the starting grid scheduled for 8:45 am - 9:30 am Saturday, April 25. The 45-minute Round Two of the 2009 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear is scheduled to take the green flag at 1:00 pm Sunday, April 26.

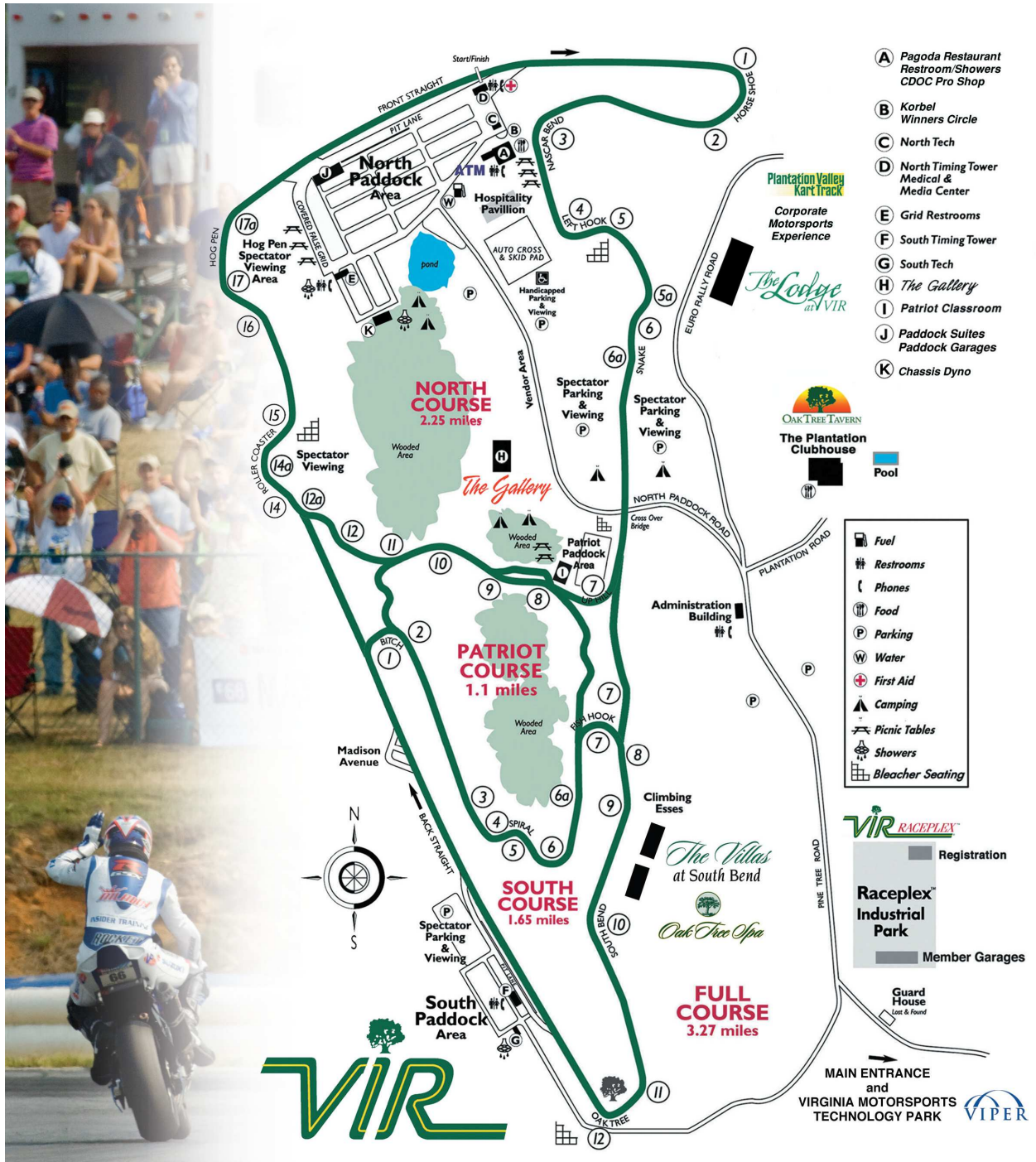
Track Location

- 12 miles east of Danville, VA
- 20 miles west of South Boston, VA
- 15 minutes from Danville Regional Airport
- One hour from Raleigh or Greensboro, on the NC state line
- Mild climate permitting year-round operation

Track Configuration

VIRginia International Raceway offers 4 configurations, of which 2 can always be run simultaneously. Facilities include two separate paddocks with timing towers, covered tech bays, classrooms, restaurant, race fuel, pro shop and restrooms with showers.

- Full Course : 3.27 miles
- North Course : 2.25 miles
- South Course : 1.65 miles
- Patriot Course : 1.1 miles
- Front Straightaway : 3000 feet
- Back Straightaway : 4000 feet
- Elevation Change: 130 feet



The History of VIR and Road Racing



Sports Car Enterprises Stock Certificate

The old saying goes that automobile racing began just a couple of hours after the second car was built. In fact, the first automobile race took place in France in 1894, from Paris to Rouen, and the first American race took place the following year, a round-trip race between Chicago and Evanston, Ill.

In the early 1900's, road racing in America was staged on public roads, following the trend established in Europe at the turn of the century. The Vanderbilt Cup and the American Grand Prize were the two premier events of the time, and the most famous races were held in Long Island, N.Y., Savannah, Ga., Milwaukee, Wis. and Santa Monica, Calif.

Soon road racing became overshadowed by oval-track racing, with such famous circuits as the Milwaukee Mile in 1903 and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 1911 paving the way. It would not be until after World War II that organized road racing started to really take hold.

The Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) was founded in Boston in 1944, an outgrowth of a pre-war group known as the Automobile Racing Club of America (ARCA) that existed from 1934 to 1941 and dissolved following the outbreak of hostilities. Following the conflict, the SCCA's first big event was run on the streets of Watkins Glen, N.Y., in 1948. Thanks to America's post-war prosperity and enthusiasm, as well as the influx of sporting automobiles from Europe such as MG, Jaguar, Ferrari, Maserati and Alfa Romeo, the sport quickly gained popularity and momentum.

Following the success of Watkins Glen, similar events sprang up in Bridgehampton, N.Y. in 1949 and Elkhart Lake, Wis., Palm Beach Shores, Fla. and Pebble Beach, Calif. in 1950.



August 4, 1957: Ed Kemm (l) and Carroll Shelby (r) stand next to the Maserati 450S driven to victory by Shelby in the feature of the first event held at VIR. Among the other drivers that weekend were Carl Haas, Bob Holbert, Augie Pabst, Walt Hansgen, Don Yenke and Dr. Dick Thompson. The announcer was Chris Economaki.

Unfortunately, spectator injuries and fatalities led to the end of public road racing in 1952 and the trend moved toward races on airport circuits and permanent road circuits. The first of these was in Watkins Glen in 1952, followed by Elkhart Lake in 1955.

In that same year, four North Carolina sports car enthusiasts – Ed Welch, Ed Alexander, George Arnold, and Hooper Johnson – formed a company called Sports Car Enterprises, Inc. with the idea of building their own racetrack. They found a suitable location just over the state line near Danville, Va., a 1200-acre plot that had served as a farm for the Foote family. The four were joined by businessman Ed Kemm in 1956 and, with an influx of cash from Kemm, were able to complete their project.

Virginia International Raceway opened for business in August, 1957, hosting an SCCA race that attracted such stars of the sport as Carroll Shelby, Carl Haas, Bob Holbert, Augie Pabst, Bob Grossman, Don Yenke, Dr. Dick Thompson, Walt Hansgen and Bruce Jennings. Shelby, who would later go on to worldwide fame by winning the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1959 and creating the iconic Cobra sports cars in the early 1960s, won that first feature race in a Maserati 450S. The laconic Texan uttered a quote about the track that is remembered to this day: “One lap at VIR is like a hundred at Watkins Glen.”

As one of the first permanent American road racing tracks, VIR soon became a fixture on the SCCA circuit and a favorite among racers due to its high-speed straights, challenging turns and dramatic elevation changes. However, its location in the heart of stock car racing country prevented it from ever attracting big crowds like those enjoyed by Watkins Glen and Elkhart Lake.



Tom Yeager takes the checkered flag in the fourth-ever Trans-Am race July 31, 1966

As a result, Sports Car Enterprises was forced to relinquish its lease on the Foote family's property in 1959. Danville's Col. Paul Rembold took over the lease and the track fell under the auspices of the Civil Air Patrol. Col. Rembold and track manager Henry Wallace were more successful in the operation of the track through the 1960s, attracting thousands of fans to sports car, motorcycle and kart races.

Among the highlights were the fourth-ever SCCA Trans-Am race in 1966, won by Tom Yeager and Bob Johnson in a Ford Mustang over a field that included NASCAR stars Richard Petty, David Pearson, Curtis Turner and Wendell Scott; the first-ever IMSA GT race in 1971, won by Peter Gregg and Hurley Haywood in a Porsche 914-6 GT; and a return engagement by IMSA in 1972, also won by Gregg and Haywood in a Porsche 911S.

The track fell on hard times in the early 1970s, and that, combined with the fuel crisis of 1973, spelled the end for VIR. The track was shuttered following an SCCA enduro on October 13, 1974.

The Foote property reverted to farmland for 25 years, until the property was leased and revived by New York real estate developer and vintage sports car racer Harvey Siegel in 1998. Siegel's vision for VIR was more expansive than anyone could have imagined, and the facility reopened in 2000, transformed into a world-class road racing circuit (repaved and widened, following the original track's center line).

Within two years, VIR began hosting the top professional sports car and motorcycle racing series in America, as well as welcoming back the amateur racers of the SCCA, whose North Carolina Region was thrilled to have their "home track" back. Under the guiding hands of Siegel and his partner Connie Nyholm, the future looks bright for VIR. The facility has received international acclaim as one of the world's most beautiful and challenging circuits, and continues to push the envelope of what a racetrack can be.



VIR Today

None of the men who first brought VIR to life, nor the racers and fans who frequented it in the early days, could have imagined the kind of showplace that exists on the site today. In the words of actor Paul Newman, who has raced in both amateur and professional competition since the 1970s, "If there's a heaven on Earth, it's VIR."

Hopefully that sentiment will be shared by racers and fans alike for generations to come.

Driving Directions

Driving from Roanoke

- Take US 220 South towards Martinsville, approx. 50 miles
- Exit onto US 58 East to Danville, VA, continue through Danville, approx. 40 miles
- Turn right onto VA-62 South to Milton, NC, through the traffic light and onto NC-57 South.
- Continue one half mile and turn left onto Racetrack Road. VIR is 1 mile on the left

Driving from Richmond

- Take Route 360 South from Richmond to South Boston
- Take 58 West at South Boston
- Take Route 119 South at Turbeville
- Follow signs to VIR
- Turn right on Sunset Road which becomes Racetrack Road to the VIR gate

Driving from Raleigh

- Take US 70 Bypass West to I-85 South
- Turn right onto US 501 Bypass North, becomes US 501
- Stay on US 501 to Roxboro, approx. 27 miles
- Turn left onto Court St. in Roxboro,
- Turn right onto NC-57, 17 miles
- Turn right onto Racetrack Rd. VIR is 1 mile on the left

Driving from Greensboro

- Take US 29 North, 45 miles
- Turn onto Danville Expressway which is US 58/29 bypass heading east towards South Boston
- Exit at 58 East towards South Boston and follow for 5 miles
- Turn right onto VA-62 South to Milton, NC, through the traffic light and onto NC-57 South.
- Continue one half mile and turn left onto Racetrack Road. VIR is 1 mile on the left

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 information, interviews and photos, contact Star Mazda Communications Director Peter Frey at (818) 398-5733 or 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.atlanticchampionship.com www.starmazda.com
www.skipbarber.com www.mx-5cup.com

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