



**WITH FIVE WINNERS IN THE FIRST SIX RACES THE RISING STARS OF THE STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP TAKE THEIR RED-HOT CHAMPIONSHIP BATTLE TO THE IOWA SPEEDWAY FOR 100 LAPS UNDER THE LIGHTS IN FRIDAY'S FIRST ANNUAL PIZZA RANCH 100**

Iowa Speedway (July 7, 2009) – The battle for supremacy in the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear is typically hot and fast, but this year, with five winners in the first six races, the competition is unusually fierce as the top young drivers from around the world head for a hundred laps of non-stop, wheel-to-wheel racing under the lights of Iowa Speedway in Friday's first annual Pizza Ranch 100.



The Star Mazda Championship is the college baseball of Indy-style auto racing; a high-speed training ground for future stars of the sport. This is the second of two oval races on the 13-event 2009 schedule and the first event, at the Milwaukee Mile on June 20 was won by Scandinavian racer Anders Krohn who led from lap 27 to the checkered in his #27 Mundill / Trallfa / Colosseum Mazda.

That performance makes him the leading contender in the Pizza Ranch 100 as well, but you also have to factor in that two of the top qualifiers, Andersen Racing teammates Englishman Richard Kent (a winner in Round 5 at New Jersey and on pole in the #33 Andersen Racing / Traka / Lafarge / Allied Interior Products Mazda) and American Conor Daly (winner in Round 4 at New Jersey and third on the starting grid driving the #22 Andersen Racing / College Network / Indeck / Cytomax Mazda) crashed together in the first turn of the first lap – thereby eliminating some potentially strong challengers.

Of those who did go the distance in Milwaukee, Adam Christodoulou, currently leading the championship and the only driver so far this season with two wins, finished second and turned the fastest lap in pre-race testing last month at Iowa Speedway - 22.059 sec. (145.900 mph) in his #11 JDC Motorsports / Molecule Mazda. The third-place finisher, Louisiana racer Alex Ardoin – driver of the #51 JDC Motorsports / Oral & Facial Surgery Center / Twister Trailer Mazda and Christodoulou's teammate at JDC Motorsports, is a fast and hungry driver in his third season of Star Mazda Championship competition. Peter 'The Irish Steamroller' Dempsey, winner of four races during the 2008 season, finished fourth at Milwaukee, won at New Jersey

and is second in the 2009 championship driving the #3 Juncos Racing / HOOTERS / Motorsport Ireland / Queyside.ie Mazda.

Another driver to keep an eye on is Conor Daly. Despite his unfortunate incident at Milwaukee, he is one of the five race winners this season and is the son of legendary Formula One/Indy Car racer Derek Daly. He is also the 2008 Skip Barber series champion and winner of this year's **MAZDASPEED** Motorsports Development Ladder scholarship. This unique program is the only automaker-supported 'ladder' that provides funding for young champions at all levels of racing to move up to the next series on the ladder with a fully-funded ride.

In point of fact, looking at all the strong performances in Milwaukee, and at the results of the Star Mazda series test at Iowa Speedway last month – 14 drivers turning a total of 4,628 laps and all posting a best time within 7/10ths of a second of each other – the only thing for sure about the Pizza Ranch 100 is that the competition will be consistently intense... and occasionally hair-raising.

"I didn't realize quite how hard it was going to be just going around in circles, how close the racing is and how high the standard of driving is," says Christodoulou, the 2008 U.K. Formula Renault champion and a highly-experienced road racer. "Watching oval racing from the grandstands and from the seat of an open-wheel car are two very different experiences. I reckon the scariest moments are when you come out of the pits because the first lap you've got to have faith in the car to know that it's going to stick to the ground; around Iowa its touch-and-go flat-out all the way around, but with a wall five meters on either side of you there's not an inch of room for error."

While the Star Mazda Championship may not be a familiar name to the fans at Iowa Speedway, it's worth noting that a number of famous names are graduates of the series... and these cars are fast! -- 250 horsepower, 1,300 pounds, 0 to 60 in 2.8 seconds and a top speed in excess of 160 mph.

By way of comparison with the other racing series on the schedule for the weekend's Prairie Meadows 200, Michael McDowell (the 2004 Star Mazda series champion), raced to a 2nd-place finish in the 2007 ARCA RE/MAX Prairie Meadows 250 after qualifying 7th with a lap of 23.999-sec. in his No. 2 Z-Line Designs / Mission Residential / Beck Dodge. (*Note: McDowell, who graduated from Star Mazda to Indy Cars and prototype sports cars before moving to stock cars, went on to race NASCAR Sprint Cup in 2008 and is currently driving the #47 in the NASCAR Nationwide Series.*) Other graduates of the Star Mazda Championship include Indy Car stars Marco Andretti, Graham Rahal and Raphael Matos (the 2005 Star Mazda champion).

On-track action for the Star Mazda Championship cars begins with a pair of one-hour practice sessions, 9:30 am - 10:30 am and 12:30 pm - 1:30 pm. Single-car qualifying will take place 3:00 pm - 3:45 pm. The Pizza Ranch 100 is scheduled to take the green flag at 8:30 pm. Fans will want to arrive early however; Iowa Speedway and Pizza Ranch are inviting race fans to join the

“Pizza Ranch Posse” on July 10th. This amazing race opportunity includes free grandstand seating for the Pizza Ranch 100, as well as admission to a pre race concert by Douglas Acres!

The “Pizza Ranch Posse” refers to the new temporary grandstand seating area at Iowa Speedway. These seats will be available for free to the first 6,500 spectators that arrive at Iowa Speedway; thanks to our friends at Pizza Ranch! All race fans need to do is mention the “Pizza Ranch Posse” upon early arrival to receive complimentary tickets to the Pizza Ranch 100 on Friday, July 10th. Ticket booths open at 3:00 PM.

“This really is an amazing way for Pizza Ranch to thank thousands of their loyal customers,” says Jerry Jauron, President of Iowa Speedway. “It’s going to be a great night of racing! Expect the “Pizza Ranch Posse” to get the fans fired up and rowdy!”

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For more information on the Star Mazda Championship and its drivers, as well as the Mazda Motorsports ladder system, please visit [www.starmazda.com](http://www.starmazda.com) and [www.mazdausa.com](http://www.mazdausa.com). For information, interviews and photos, contact Star Mazda Communications Director Peter Frey at (818) 398-5733 or [StarMazdaPR@aol.com](mailto:StarMazdaPR@aol.com).

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For more information about Pizza Ranch and their involvement with motorsports and the Iowa Speedway, go to [www.PizzaRanchRacing.com](http://www.PizzaRanchRacing.com)

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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:

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