



## THE BATTLE TO CROWN OPEN-WHEEL RACING'S NEWEST RISING STAR HEADS TO ROAD ATLANTA FOR THIS WEEKEND'S PETITE LE MANS POWERED BY MAZDA6

***North America's hottest open-wheel driver development series heads into the 2-race home stretch with six drivers on the win list and eight still in the championship battle***

**Fast Facts** – Round 12 of the 13- Race 2009 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear at the 2009 Petit Le Mans powered by MAZDA6, September 23- 26

- The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear features the deepest and most diverse talent pool of rising open-wheel stars in North American auto racing; with two races to go in the 2009 season – and 90 points up for grabs -- eight drivers are still battling for the championship; three Americans, two Englishmen, a Brazilian, a Norwegian and an Irishman.
- While eight drivers still have a mathematical chance, the two main title contenders -- barring a bizarre finish to the season – are Peter 'the Irish Steamroller' Dempsey, winner of four races so far this season, three of them from the pole, and Englishman Adam Christodoulou, the 2008 UK Formula Renault Champion who has won two races and scored five podium finishes. The duo is separated by just seven points (399 vs. 392)... and the Star Mazda Championship awards 44 points for a win (as well a 1 for pole, making a maximum of 90 points available in the final two races.)
- A trio of hot young American occupy positions 3-4-5 in the championship battle; Conor Daly, son of racing legend Derek Daly and winner of the 2009 MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder scholarship and winner of Round 4 in New Jersey; Joel Miller, last year's MAZDASPEED driver back for another shot at the title; and Alex Ardoin, who won Round 10 at Trois Rivieres.
- Positions 6-7-8 include Englishman Richard Kent, winner of two races and four pole positions; Norwegian racer Anders Krohn who won his team's first-ever Star Mazda race on the oval at Milwaukee; and Brazilian Ciao Lara, with four top-5 and six top-20 finishes.
- The Star Mazda Championship is unique in having categories for more mature racers in whom the competitive fire still burns brightly; 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. Battling for the Expert Series Championship are Japanese racer Toshihiro Deki and Canadian Chris Cumming, the 2008 Expert Champion. California Mike Guasch has already clinched the Master Series title.
- Star Mazda Championship drivers participating in the Racing for Kids program will visit Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Scottish Rite at 4:15 pm, Thursday, Sept. 24.
- The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear ([www.starmazda.com](http://www.starmazda.com)) is the college varsity of Indy 500-style auto racing, a high-speed training ground for future stars of the sport. Series graduates – including Marco Andretti, Graham Rahal, Raphael Matos, Michael McDowell and Dane Cameron – have gone on to race in F1, Indy Cars, NASCAR, ALMS and Grand-Am. Star Mazda race cars have a top speed of 160 mph and 0 to 60 mph acceleration takes just 2.8 seconds. Prizes for 2009 are worth \$1.5 million.

Road Atlanta (September 21, 2009) – With two races remaining on the schedule and eight of the series' 25 regular drivers still mathematically in contention for the championship, the struggle for supremacy in this weekend's Petit Le Mans presented by MAZDA6 - Round 12 of the 13-race 2009 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear – is sure to be a high-speed, wheel-banging battle that will have fans on their feet.

2009 has been a remarkable season with the deepest and most diverse talent pool in recent Star Mazda Championship history – even considering that series alumni include F1 drivers, Indy Car and NASCAR stars, prototype racers and more than half a dozen drivers on the grid for this weekend's Petit Le Mans feature race.

The starting grid for Friday's Star Mazda Championship race will feature drivers from ten countries, including three of the top-4 and seven of the top-10 challengers from the 2008 championship... and eight of those drivers -- three Americans, two Englishmen, an Irishman, a Norwegian and a Brazilian – are all still in the fight for the championship and the career-making prize it offers; a fully-funded drive in the 2010 Atlantic Championship powered by Mazda, courtesy of the *MAZDASPEED* Motorsports Driver Development Ladder.



Currently leading the pack with a slim points margin (399 vs. 392) but a persuasive dominance that has only reinforced the appropriateness of his nickname – The Irish Steamroller – is championship leader Peter Dempsey. He has won four races so far this year, on both road courses and ovals, an achievement made all the more impressive by the fact that he did it with two different teams. That said, he also won four races last year, and started this event from the pole... only to finish 17th and see his championship hopes slip away race winner -- and ultimately the 2009 Star Mazda champion --

American John Edwards. Add to that the fact that Dempsey's current team experienced some personnel setbacks during the recent Canadian rounds and his last two finishes were 13th in Round 10 at Trois Rivieres and 4th in Round 11 at Mosport. With his team now back at full strength, Dempsey's laser-like focus is on putting his #3 Juncos Racing / The Collection / Motorsport Ireland / Queyside.ie Mazda back in Victory Lane at Road Atlanta this weekend.

Dempsey's closest competitor – just seven points back with 44 points awarded for a victory (as well as one for pole – making a total of 90 points up for grabs in the remaining two races) -- is Englishman Adam Christodoulou, the 2008 UK Formula Renault champion. In his first season of Star Mazda Championship competition, he has won two races – and started from the pole twice driving the #11 JDC Motorsports / Molecule / Alpinestars Mazda. He's looking to re-establish his dominant form from early in the season when he won the season-opener at Sebring and Round 3 at Salt Lake City. He's been on the podium five times since then, but the next victory has proved elusive. He doesn't need to win in the final two races, but he does need to finish ahead of Dempsey in at least one, and by enough of a margin to erase – and reverse -- the points gap.

A trio of hot young Americans occupy positions 3-4-5 in the championship battle, but the 57-point gap back from Dempsey to the leading domestic contender makes it... not impossible, but a seriously uphill climb. That contender, however, is young American racing royalty, Conor Daly, son of racing legend Derek Daly. A resident of the aptly-named Noblesville, Indiana, Daly won the 2008 Skip Barber Pro Series and along with it the *MAZDASPEED* Motorsports Driver Development Ladder scholarship that funded his 2009 Star Mazda Championship drive in the #22 Andersen Racing / College Network / Indeck / Cytomax Mazda. Third in points

with 342, he won from the pole at New Jersey Motorsports Park, and has scored four podium finishes, but his momentum was slowed by two finishes outside the top-20. He has recently been extremely successful testing open-wheel cars in Europe, suggesting his future road leads to F1.

Californian Joel Miller, the 2007 Skip Barber Champion and last year's Star Mazda MAZDASPEED Ladder driver, won the 2008 Sebring season-opener from the pole. He finished second in the 2008 championship and is back this season for another shot at the title... and the scholarship that would let him move up to the Atlantic Championship next year. He has yet to win again, but has put together a solid season driving the #2 Andersen Racing / Doug Mockett & Co. Mazda with three podiums, four top-5s and 336 points. He finished 2nd in this event last year. Another American Star Mazda veteran is Louisiana racer Alex Ardoin, who won the 2007 season-ender at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in his rookie year and finished 6th in the championship. In 2008, he finished on the podium four times and was 4th in the championship. This year, he scored an emotional victory in Round 10 at Trois-Rivières driving the #51 JDC Motorsports / Oral & Facial Surgery Center / Twister Trailer Mazda. Along with three podium finishes, he has 329 points.

Only one driver aside from Dempsey and Christodoulou has won more than one race in 2009, the English driver of the #33 Andersen Racing / Traka Allied Interior Products Mazda, Richard Kent (center, on the podium at Mosport). He made a major impression on the series in 2008 when, driving a one-off race for the Andersen Racing team, he won from the pole in the season-ender at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. In 2009, his first full season, he is currently 6th in the championship with 317 points, with wins in Round 5 at New Jersey Motorsports Park and Round 11 at Mosport. He has started from the pole four times, more than any other driver, but also missed Round 2 due to a non-racing ankle injury.



Sitting 7th in the championship and still 'in with a shout' is another overseas racer with a unique nickname; Anders 'The Viking' Krohn, from Sandnes, Norway. Arriving in the 2009 Star Mazda Championship after dominating the 2008 FF2000 championship, Krohn scored his first-ever Star Mazda victory on the Milwaukee Mile oval driving the #27 Team Mundill / Trallfa / Colosseum Mazda. His season so far also includes six top-10 finishes and he has 316 points. The final driver in championship contention is rising Brazilian star Caio Lara, driver of the #19 JDC Motorsports / MLD / ATW/ Molecule Mazda. He has had a steady season, finishing in the top-10 in every race but one (20th in Round 10 at Trois-Rivières). His best results have been a pair of 4th-place finishes at Sebring and New Jersey; he is 8th in the championship with 311 points. He finished 5th in this race in 2008.

The Star Mazda Championship is unique in having categories for more mature racers in whom the competitive fire still burns brightly; 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. Californian Mike Guasch, 51, who has scored six in-class wins (with best finishes of 11th overall at both Autobahn and Trois-Rivières), has already clinched the Master Series title driving the #91 JDC Motorsports / Molecule Mazda. Still to be settled is the Expert Series championship, which comes down to a battle between Japanese driver Toshihiro Deki, driver of the #80 Juncos Racing Mazda (three in-class wins) and Vancouver resident Chris

Cumming, the 2008 Expert Series champion, driving the #16 World Speed Motorsports Mazda. Cumming missed the last two races while he prepared to compete in the Ironman Canada triathlon, but has six in-class wins so far and will try and keep his title in the final two races. Deki has 172 points vs. 148 for Cumming.



On-track Star Mazda Championship action at the Petit Le Mans presented by MAZDA6 begins with a 'promoter test' on Tuesday, Sept. 22. Official practice begins with a morning and afternoon session on Wednesday, Sept. 23. Qualifying to set the grid for the always-exciting Star Mazda 'standing start' will take place from 2:20 – 3:05 pm Thursday, Sept. 24. Immediately afterward, drivers participating in the Racing for Kids program will visit the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Scottish Rite (1001 Johnson Ferry Road NE) at 4:15 pm. The Star Mazda Championship field

will take the green light for the 45-minute Round 12 of the 2009 season at 5:30 pm Friday, Sept. 25. Round 13, the season finale, takes place at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca on October 10.

### **About The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear**

For 2009, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear ([www.starmazda.com](http://www.starmazda.com)) 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. For drivers interested in competing in the series, detailed information is available at [www.starmazda.com/newdriver](http://www.starmazda.com/newdriver).

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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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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.

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