



LAST MEN STANDING – TWO BATTLES REMAIN TO BE FOUGHT IN THE 2009 STAR MAZDA SEASON FINALE THIS WEEKEND AT MAZDA RACEWAY LAGUNA SECA

The overall Series championship and the Expert Series championship for drivers 30 -44 years old are up for grabs this weekend

Fast Facts – Final round of the 13- race 2009 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear at the Monterey Sports Car Championships at Mazda Raceway

- Two drivers remain in contention for the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear overall Series championship; Irishman Peter Dempsey (the points leader with five wins) and Englishman Adam Christodoulou (two wins and six podium finishes). Christodoulou has already clinched the 'Rookie of the Year' award.
- The overall Star Mazda series champion will receive, via the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder program, a fully-sponsored ride in the 2010 Atlantic Championship Powered by Mazda. The 2008 Star Mazda champion, John Edwards, is one of three drivers battling for the Atlantic Championship this weekend at Mazda Raceway.
- The Star Mazda Championship features two internal championships for more mature racers in whom the competitive fire still burns brightly. Two drivers, Chris Cumming of Vancouver, B.C. and Japanese racer Toshihiro Deki, will battle for the Expert Series championship for drivers 30 – 44 years old. The Master Series championship, for drivers 45 and older, has already been won by Mike Guasch, 51, of Benicia, California.
- Drivers from ten countries (U.S., Canada, Ireland, England, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Japan and Norway) competed in the 2009 Star Mazda Championship, racing on a combination of road courses, street circuits and ovals. Six drivers have scored victories during the season; Peter Dempsey (5), Adam Christodoulou (2) and Richard Kent (2), as well as Conor Daly, Alex Ardoin and Anders Krohn (one each).
- The Star Mazda Championship (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, including the Atlantic Championship sponsorship, are worth \$1.5 million.

Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca / Oct. 6 -- After twelve races throughout North America, held on a challenging combination of road courses, street circuits and ovals, the battle for the 2009 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear has come down to two titles, four drivers and one race – this weekend's Monterey Sports Car Championships at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca.



The fight for the overall Series title – and the career-making prize that goes with it – pits Peter 'The Irish Steamroller' Dempsey (left), driver of the #3 Juncos Racing / The Collection / Motorsport Ireland / Queyside.ie Mazda and leading the championship with five wins and five poles, against English racer Adam Christodoulou (below right), who has won two races, started from the pole twice, and finished on the podium an additional six times at the wheel of the #11 JDC Motorsports /

Molecule / Alpinestars Mazda.

The two rising open-wheel stars are separated by a bare 15 points; and there are 45 points (44 for a win and one for pole) up for grabs this weekend. Dempsey needs finish only 6th or better to clinch the title no matter where Christodoulou finishes, but both drivers are hungry to finish up the season with a win and the 45-minute season finale, scheduled to take the green light for the always-exciting standing start at 12:50 pm, Saturday, October 10, is sure to feature a high-speed, wheel-banging battle that will have fans on their feet.

The outcome of this race is of particular significance to these two drivers not only because of their natural competitiveness, but also because of the grand prize that goes to the Series champion; included in the \$1.5 million in prizes that will be handed out during the post-race awards ceremony is a fully-funded drive in the next step up the open-wheel racing ladder, the 2010 Atlantic Championship Powered by Mazda. This racing 'scholarship,' valued at \$750,000, is awarded by the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder, the only automaker-supported ladder program that funds series champions moving up to the next level -- and reaches all the way from karting to the top levels of racing.



By way of example; 2004 Star Mazda Champion Michael McDowell moved on to race in Indy Cars, prototypes and is now competing in NASCAR. 2005 champion Raphael Matos went on to win the Atlantic and Indy Lights championships and is now racing in the IRL. Dane Cameron, the 2007 Star Mazda champion, graduated through the Atlantic ranks to compete full-time in the Grand-Am GT1 class driving a Mazda RX-8 for Racers Edge Motorsports. And John Edwards, who won the 2008 Star Mazda championship, is one of three drivers in contention to win the 2009 Atlantic Championship this weekend – and the \$1 million sponsorship prize that goes with it.

It should also be noted that the Star Mazda Championship, as a middle rung on the MAZDASPEED Ladder, has scholarship winners coming and going. As Edwards was moving up to Atlantic, entering the Star Mazda series at the beginning of 2009 was Conor Daly, the 2008 champion in the Skip Barber Pro Series. Daly, the son of racing legend Derek Daly, drives the #22 Andersen Racing / College Network / Indeck / Cytomax Mazda and will finish third in the championship. Coming into Mazda Raceway, he has scored one win (from the pole) and five podium finishes. With a Formula One career like his father's firmly in his sights, he tested in Europe recently, with impressive results.

Beyond the overall Series Championship, there are other significant battles that will be waged among the more than 25 cars expected on the starting grid at Mazda Raceway. While Christodoulou has already clinched the prestigious 'Rookie of the Year' award, there is a second, thoroughly unique 'championship-within-a-championship' to be won this weekend; The Star Mazda Championship features 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, however, 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 eight in-class top-3 finishes) and Vancouver resident Chris Cumming (left), the 2008



Expert Series champion, driving the #16 World Speed Motorsports Mazda. Cumming missed two races while he prepared to compete in the Ironman Canada triathlon, but has seven in-class wins so far. Deki has 172 points vs. 168 for Cumming, and with 20 points awarded for a win, these two drivers will be engaged in a battle royal back in the field – Deki to become champion in his rookie year and Cumming to retain his 2008 title.

Once we get away from talking about championships and rookie awards and focus on likely contenders to win the race, the field becomes a good deal wider. 2009 has been a remarkable season with the deepest and most diverse talent pool in recent Star Mazda Championship history, including drivers from ten countries as well as three of the top-4 and seven of the top-10 drivers from

2008 who came back to compete again for the championship. Six drivers, including Dempsey and Christodoulou, have won races this season – and are perfectly capable of doing it again this weekend.

The other four include the only other multi-race winner, Englishman Richard Kent, currently 6th in the championship with two victories, four pole positions and 347 points driving the #33 Andersen Racing / Traka Allied Interior Products Mazda. 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 this very event. He started on the pole and finished second in the season-opener at Sebring (a race won by Christodoulou), but missed Round 2 due to a non-racing ankle injury. He also started from the pole at the first oval of the season, the Milwaukee Mile, but was eliminated from competition by contact with another car on the first turn of the first lap. But for either of those problems, it would be a 3-way battle for the championship this weekend.

The driver who won that race at Milwaukee, Scandinavian racer Anders 'The Viking' Krohn, is another prime contender for victory lane this weekend. Currently seventh in points with 343, he has seven top-10 finishes and has been quicker than his results show in the last couple of races.

Another highly-experienced winner this season is Alex Ardoin, a 3-season Star Mazda veteran. He won this event in 2007; 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 (right) driving the #51 JDC Motorsports / Oral & Facial Surgery Center / Twister Trailer Mazda. With his win, three podium finishes and five top-10 results, he sits 5th in the championship with 361 points.



Californian Joel Miller, the 2007 Skip Barber Champion and last year's Star Mazda MAZDASPEED Ladder driver, has yet to win in his second season of Star Mazda competition. But he did win last year's Sebring season-opener from the pole and finish second in the 2008 championship. He has put together a solid season driving the #2 Andersen Racing / Doug Mockett & Co. Mazda with three podiums, five top-5s for 370 points and 4th place in the championship – and he finished a solid 4th in this race last year.

It must also be said, given that this race has been won for the past two years by a driver for whom it was the first victory of the season, that you can't overlook drivers who have shown great competitive spirit during the season, such as Texan Rusty Mitchell who started from the pole at Trois Rivières in his #66 Mitchell Motorsports / Motorola Mazda and led every lap but the last one, losing to a superbly-executed pass by Alex Ardoin. Or the extremely quick young Brazilian, Ciao Lara, a second-season driver who has scored four top-5 and seven top-10 finishes in his #19 JDC Motorsports / MLD / ATW/ Molecule Mazda and sits 8th in the points with 339.



On-track Star Mazda Championship action at the Monterey Sports Car Championships at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca begins with a 'promoter test' on Thursday, Oct. 8. Official practice begins with a morning and afternoon session on Friday, Oct. 9. Qualifying to set the grid for the always-exciting Star Mazda 'standing start' will take place from 8:00 – 8:45 am Saturday, Oct 10, with the expected field of 25+ Star Mazda cars and drivers taking the green light for the 45-minute 2009 season finale at 12:50 pm. The Star Mazda Championship awards ceremony will be held 4 – 7 pm at the Chateau Julien winery in Carmel.

About The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear

For 2009, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear (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.

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.atlantic-championship.com

www.skipbarber.com

www.mx-5cup.com

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