



TRISTAN VAUTIER WINS SEBRING SEASON-OPENER OF 2010 STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP

Sebring International Raceway / March 19, 2010 – Tristan Vautier of Grenoble, France, a rookie to U.S. racing but boasting an extensive European open-wheel resume, claimed victory in



Round One of the 13-race 2010 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear driving his #38 Andersen Racing / Moulin TP / Cecibon / Circuit du Laquais Mazda. Vautier also became the first winner of the VISIT FLORIDA Trophy, the newly-announced championship-within-a-championship sponsored by the state's official tourism company.

Vautier, who qualified third on the grid for the traditionally-exciting Star Mazda standing start, stalked race leader Conor Daly for the first half of the 45-minute race, finally making the pass at the half-way mark on the straight between turns 12 and 14. The final finishing order was Vautier, second-year Venezuelan racer Jorge Goncalvez in the #9 Team Apex / Wabash Capital Investments Mazda and Daly. And it was a near thing with Goncalvez; he took a serious run at Vautier in Turn One on the re-start after a mid-race full-course yellow and nearly made it stick. As it was, he finished just 0.175 sec. behind the

leader; this is his first-ever Star Mazda podium finish after finishing 9th in this event last year and scoring a best finish of 4th in his rookie season in 2009.

The top-finishing Master Series driver (ages 45 and older) was Gerry Kraut who finished a very creditable 12th-overall in his #55 JDC Motorsports / Dougherty & Co. / Dougherty Funding LLC Mazda. Expert Series winner (drivers 30 to 44) J W Roberts was lucky to have his engine expire on the last turn of the last lap and coasted across the finish line 17th overall to claim the final podium spot.

"I passed Connor on the straight between 12 and 14; his car looked quite hard to drive so I went to the right and he stayed fair, which I thank him for," said Vautier, whose resume includes both the European Palmer Audi series and the FIA Formula Two Championship. "I was sitting there third on the grid just thinking to have a clean race and do as good as I can, but I was faster

than I expected and was able to put in a very good result for my fans and sponsors and the Andersen team that gave me such a good car. It was a good first race, but not an easy one; this Star Mazda racing is at the same competitive level as European series, so I think this is going to be a very long, very hard season."

Rounding out the top-5 were Quebec racer Mikael Grenier, who qualified 2nd and finished 4th in #17 Andersen Racing / NAPA Auto Parts / CAA-Quebec/HS Telecom Mazda, and Anders Krohn who started from the pole, got shuffled back in traffic on the opening lap and managed a 5th-place finish in the #47 Andersen Racing / Norse Cutting & Abandonment / Tralfalgar / Colosseum. Krohn is a second-year Star Mazda racer who won on the Milwaukee Mile last year and finished 6th in the championship. He finished 3rd in this race last year. Grenier ran six Star Mazda races in 2009 in preparation for a full-season assault on the 2010 title; he finished on the podium in two of them, but this was his first race at Sebring.

Connor De Phillippi, the 2009 Skip Barber Pro Series champion who won his 2010 Star Mazda Championship ride courtesy of the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder qualified 10th for his first race and finished 7th. Possibly the drive of the race (non-podium division) was put in by Texan Rusty Mitchell. A third-season Star Mazda racer, he qualified 11th in his #66 Mitchell Motorsports / Motorola / Petro Comm. Mazda but was penalized by series officials for 'jumping the start.' A drive-through-the-pits penalty put him at the back on the field on Lap 4 but he managed to race his way back into contention, finishing 11th. Mitchell started from the pole and finished 2nd in the streets of Trois Rivières last season.

The hard luck story of the race was no doubt Englishman Richard Kent, driving the #33 Team GDT / Traka Mazda in 2010 after a 2009 season that saw him win two races, score three pole positions and finish 7th in the championship. Struggling with a new team, he still managed to qualify 8th before being sidelined on the reconnaissance lap prior to the start of the race by a broken driveshaft. Twenty-two cars finally took the green light for the standing start, and 18 of them finished on the lead lap.

Results for the race are final and the points standings among the top-10 are; Vautier 44, Goncalvez 33, Daly 37, Grenier 34, Krohn 33 (32 plus one for pole), Joao Horta 30, Connor De Phillippi 29, Michael Furfari 28, Chris Miller 27 and Caio Lara 26. JW Roberts leads the Expert Series with 20 points and Gerry Kraut leads the Master Series, also with 20 points.

Round Two of the 2010 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear takes place next weekend at the Grand Prix of St. Petersburg; this will be the first time Star Mazda cars have competed on an IRL IZOD IndyCar weekend and is part of the newly-announced 'Road to Indy' driver development program that also includes the Cooper Tires Presents USF2000 National Championship Powered by Mazda and Firestone Indy Lights; all three series will be on track at St. Petersburg. On-track action in St. Pete begins with various practice sessions on Friday,

March 26. Star Mazda Championship qualifying takes place from 8:50 – 9:35 Saturday, March 27, with the race scheduled to take the green light at 11:50 am Sunday, March 28.

About Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear

For 2010, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear will feature an 11-weekend, 13-race schedule, most on major race weekends with American Le Mans and the Indy Racing League. Rising stars from around the world will compete for prizes valued at \$1.5 million and benefit from two driver development programs, including the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder and the Indy Racing League's 'Road to Indy' program. Series alumni include Indy Car stars Marco Andretti, Graham Rahal and Raphael Matos, rising NASCAR drivers Michael McDowell, Scott Speed and Colin Braun and prototype racers Dane Cameron and Guy Cosmo. 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 more information on the Star Mazda Championship please visit www.starmazda.com.

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. For VISIT FLORIDA information, go to www.visitflorida.com.

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