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SAGE KARAM QUICKEST IN STAR MAZDA SERIES TEST AT INFINEON RACEWAY – TEAMS AND DRIVERS TUNE UP FOR ROUND 9 OF THE 2011 SEASON AT NEXT WEEKEND'S INDY GRAND PRIX OF SONOMA

Infineon Raceway, Sonoma, CA / August 17, 2011 – The teams and drivers of the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear – representing eight countries - took their first laps around the



2.52-mile, 12-turn road course at Infineon Raceway since 2005, the last time the series raced here. The grid for that long-ago double-header weekend included Marco Andretti, Graham Rahal, Raphael Matos (the driver who eventually went on to win the championship) and James Hinchcliffe, the winner in Sunday's Race 2, his first-ever Star Mazda win; all are now racing in IndyCar.

Setting the quick time in the second session of the one-day official series test was Sage Karam, who turned a lap of 1:29.381 in the #88 Andretti Autosport / MAZDASPEED / Comfort Revolution Mazda. Karam, a native of the Andretti home town of Nazareth, PA, has scored two wins so far this season and is 5th in the championship points.

Less than 2/10ths of a second slower – in point of fact, the top-5 were all within half a second of each other -- was current championship points leader Tristan Vautier of Grenoble, France, with a lap of 1:29.572 in his #5 JDC Motorsports / Cecibon / Circuit du Laquais Mazda. Vautier has also won two races this season, scored four podiums and finished every race in the top-5. Turning the 3rd-quick time on the time sheets was Brazilian racer João Victor Horto, a second-season Star Mazda driver who scored his first-ever series victory in Round 6 at Mosport. He turned a 1:29.668 in the #7 Juncos Racing / Programa Leilões Mazda.

Turning the 4th-quick time of the day was Southern California driver Connor De Phillippi who, though second in the points championship, is the only three-race winner so far in the series. He set a time of 1:29.672 in the #11 Team Pelfrey / Justice Brothers Products / Trademark Garage Floors Mazda.

The fifth spot on the time sheet is where the list of 'usual suspects' makes an unexpected and interesting detour. Irish racer Patrick O'Neill, who has been competing in the Star Mazda Championship since 2004, drove in the 2005 Star Mazda race at Infineon. More recently, he won the National Pro FM championship (driving his Star Mazda race car) in 2010. His extensive knowledge of the Infineon track, in addition to his



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well-honed driving talent and fearless style, helped him set a time of 1:29.687 in the #64 O'Neill Racing / O'Neill Construction Mazda.

This will be his first Star Mazda Championship race of the season and he will be competing in the Expert Class for drivers 30 and older. The Expert Class is a race-within-a-race that pits the company CEOs and entrepreneurs that populate the class in wheel-to-wheel competition against the hottest young drivers from around the world. And while discussing drivers who were on the grid the last time the Star Mazda series raced at Infineon, mention must also be made of Stan Kohls of Hayden Lake, IN who, more recently, won the 2010 FCC Pro FM West Coast Regional Championship; he set the 14th-quick time of 1:32.111 in yesterday's test. Like O'Neill, he will be competing in the Expert Series.

Another Expert Series racer of note participating in the test is Larry Pegram, both a regular Star Mazda competitor and a top rider in the AMA Superbike championship. He has already raced at Infineon this season, finishing 9th in the West Coast Moto Jam AMA Superbike race on May 15. Pegram turned the 10th-fast time of the test, 1:30.992, in the #72 AIM Autosport / Tampa Bay Jaw Surgery / Foremost Insurance Mazda.

The main competition for Expert Series drivers will come from Texan J.W. Roberts, who is both driver for and owner of Team GDT. Roberts won the 2010 Star Mazda Expert Series and is leading the Expert Series points championship again this year. He set a 16th-fast time of 1:32.851 in the #48 Team GDT / Motorsport Ireland / Irish Sports Council / General Data Tech Mazda.

Drivers new to the series who participated in the test include Zach Veach, a top competitor in the USF2000 National Championship, which, along with Star Mazda and Indy Lights, is part of the Mazda Road to Indy. Veach, from Stockdale, OH, has secured three USF2000 pole positions and one race win, along with eight top-10 finishes, putting him in third place in championship points. He will be running the final two Star Mazda Championship races of the season, Infineon and Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, as a teammate to Sage Karam. During testing, Veach turned a 15th-fast time of 1:32.586 in the # 77 Andretti Autosport / Zakosi Data Back-up Mazda. Also new to Star Mazda Competition is British driver Lloyd Reade, currently competing in an open-wheel SCCA class; he will drive with World Speed Motorsports and set the 13th-quick time of 1:31.915 in the #16 World Speed / FireDog / Flextronics Mazda.



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Pos No.	Name	Overall BestTm	In Session	Sponsor
1	88 Sage Karam	1:29.381	Wednesday Second Practice	MAZDASPEED / Comfort Revolution
2	5 Tristan Vautier	1:29.572	Wednesday Second Practice	Cecibon, Circuit du Laquais, Fontanel
3	7 J.V. Horto	1:29.668	Wednesday Second Practice	Programa LeiLoes
4	11 Connor De Phillippi	1:29.672	Wednesday Test Day	Justice Brothers Products / Trademark Garage Floors
5	64 Patrick O'Neil	1:29.687	Wednesday Test Day	
6	81 Nick Andries	1:30.067	Wednesday Second Practice	Lithionics Battery / GS610 Brake Fluid / Trademark Garage Floors
7	28 Gustavo Menezes	1:30.264	Wednesday Third Session	www.truecar.com / Truecar, Inc.
8	10 Tatiana Calderon	1:30.530	Wednesday Second Practice	JAC Motors
9	39 Joao Jardim	1:30.862	Wednesday Second Practice	Shopping M
10	72 Larry Pegram	1:30.992	Wednesday Second Practice	Foremost Insurance / Tampa Bay Jaw Surgery
11	20 Carlos Linares	1:31.114	Wednesday Third Session	Mindeporte
12	27 Nick Mancuso	1:31.538	Wednesday Final Session	Indeck / Lake Forest Sports Cars
13	16 Lloyd Reed	1:31.915	Wednesday Second Practice	
14	8 Stan Kohls	1:32.111	Wednesday Third Session	
15	77 Zach Veach	1:32.586	Wednesday Second Practice	Zakoski Data Backup
16	65 J.W. Roberts	1:32.851	Wednesday Second Practice	General Data Tech
17	55 Mikael Goikberg	1:32.873	Wednesday Third Session	
18	48 J.W. Roberts	1:35.191	Wednesday Final Session	Motorsport Ireland / Irish Sports Council / General Data Tech
19	23 Walt Bowlin	1:35.382	Wednesday Second Practice	Tampa Bay Jaw Surgery

On-track Star Mazda Championship action at next weekend's Indy Grand Prix of Sonoma begins with a pair of practice sessions on Friday, August 26. Qualifying is set for 9:50 - 10:35 am, Saturday, August 27 with the series' always-exciting Formula One-style standing start getting the green light at 5:00 pm Saturday afternoon for a one-hour race.



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While the first half of the 10-weekend, 11-race 2011 Star Mazda Championship season took place over the course of six months, starting with the season-opener at IndyCar's Grand Prix of St. Petersburg in March and hitting the half-way point with a double-header at the GP3R in Trois-Rivieres, Quebec in August, the remaining half of the season is on a highly-compressed schedule. The Indy Grand Prix of Sonoma is Round 9; Round 10 will be at IndyCar's Baltimore Grand Prix on September 4, with the season finale taking place at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca on September 18 with the American Le Mans series.

For more information on the Star Mazda Championship and its drivers, as well as the Mazda Road to Indy, 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.

Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/starmazdaseries>

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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:

www.mx-5cup.com www.skipbarber.com www.usf2000.com www.starmazda.com

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