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STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP DRIVERS GEAR UP FOR ROUNDS 7 & 8 OF THE 2011 SEASON WITH THIS WEEKEND'S DOUBLE-HEADER AT THE 42nd ANNUAL GP3R AT TROIS-RIVIÈRES

Trois-Rivières, Quebec / August 2, 1022 – With a dramatic Round 6 at Mosport now in the record books, along with the name of first-time winner J.V. Horto, the drivers and teams of the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear



move on to one of the most important weekends on the schedule – a double-header at this weekend's 42nd annual GP3R at Trois-Rivières.

The event presents both great challenges and great opportunities with two races and two opportunities to score points... but with a twist. The unique qualifying format will see drivers qualify for Saturday's race on

Friday, with their fastest lap during that race being used to determine their starting position for Sunday.

It's a situation ideally suited to the driver who has the best rapport with his or her engineer, and the least fear of the narrow circuit with heavily-crowned roads line by unforgiving concrete walls. But if you don't roll off the trailer fast, the weekend could be a nightmare for any number of carefully-nurtured championship hopes.

Sentimentalists, nationalists and fans of the underdog will likely be rooting for Québec racer Jérémy Daniel with his home-grown 'The Racing Company' team fielding the #26 Daniel Racing / FixAuto / Sherwin-Williams Mazda; his best finishes so far this season have been a pair of top-10s in Round 1 through the streets of St. Petersburg and Round 3 in the Night Before the 500 on the oval at Lucas Oil Raceway. Daniel is currently 11th in the championship battle, but racing in front of a home-town crowd (or home province, anyway) has a tendency to bring out a little extra 'something' in a driver.

A betting man (or woman), on the other hand, would be keeping an eye on the winner in Round 6 at Mosport, Brazilian racer João Victor Horto. Not only is he carrying the momentum of his first-ever Star Mazda Championship win into this weekend with him – along with the championship-caliber expertise of the Juncos Racing team that won the 2010 championship – but he is the highest-finishing driver in the field who drove in this event last year, finishing 6th. *Note: Four of the top-5 drivers in last year's race, and seven of the top-10, including Jorge Goncalvez, Conor Daly, Anders Krohn, David Ostella, Caio Lara, Rusty Mitchell and Mikael Grenier, have all moved up to Indy Lights, which will be sharing the GP3R stage with Star Mazda this weekend.*



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"I'm very happy to go back to Trois-Rivières again," says Horto (with flag), currently 4th in the Star Mazda Championship points battle. "The circuit is such a unique and challenging place, and all the fans make everything even more beautiful. I'm really looking forward to racing there with Juncos Racing this year, and thanks to the Mazda Road to Indy program, we are able to race at the same place as the Firestone Indy Lights Series which is our next step on the development ladder to the IZOD IndyCar Series. I'm really confident after winning at Mosport a couple of weeks ago. My team and I are going to keep working very hard, and God willing, we will fight for another great result at Trois-Rivières. We are a lot closer to the lead in the championship points, and we want to keep our momentum going in this doubleheader race weekend."



Next up on the 'previous experience' list is Horton's Juncos Racing teammate, Colombian racer Tatiana Calderon (right), the lone female driver in the series. She finished 9th at GP3R last year but an off-season testing and physical training program has upped her game and she has a pair of podium finishes so far this year and is 8th in the championship battle racing the #10 Juncos Racing / JAC Motors Mazda. Immediately behind her in the 2010 finishing order is the current Star Mazda Championship point's leader, French racer Tristan Vautier. He won Round 2 at Barber Motorsports Park driving the #5 JDC Motorsports / Cecibon / Circuit du Laquais Mazda... and has finished every event since in the top-5.

Giving credit where credit is due, the top-finishing driver at GP3R in 2010 in the Expert Series for racers 30 and older was Texan J.W. Roberts, owner of Team GDT and driver of the #65 Team GDT / General Data Tech Mazda. He has three in-class wins so far this season, and his competition will come from two other Expert Series drivers; Tampa, Florida oral surgeon Walt Bowlin, the in-class winner at Mosport driving the #23 AIM Autosport / Tampa Bay Jaw Surgery Mazda, and top-ranked AMA Superbike racer Larry Pegram; both will be driving for the Toronto-based AIM Autosport team. Bowlin raced here last year, but this will be Pegram's debut in the streets of Trois-Rivières.

Another GP3R veteran to watch is Venezuelan driver Carlos Linares in the #20 Linares Racing / Mindeporte Mazda. He finished 16th in this event last year, but the team was completely re-built during the off-season under the guidance of highly-regarded team manager Martin Bates. As a result, Linares, though



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9th in the championship, is in the process of putting together a very consistent season; he has finished five out of six races in the top-10, including a top-5 in Round 2 at Barber Motorsports Park.

Having previous experience on a particular track is useful to a driver and team, but does not always tell the tale of how a weekend is going to go. And there are three drivers, two of them veterans of this highly-technical track and one a rookie, who are among the top contenders this year and have to be looked at seriously this weekend. Team Pelfrey teammates Connor De Phillippi (California) and Nick Andries (Florida) finished 17th and 18th, respectively, at Trois-Rivières last year.



That said, this year they are with a top team (a former IndyCar team now fielding a 2-car Star Mazda effort) and are ranked 2nd and 3rd, respectively, in the championship points. De Phillippi, the 2009 Skip Barber Pro Series champion who raced in Star Mazda in 2010 with scholarship funding from the Mazda Road to Indy, won Rounds 1 and 3 (from the pole), and finished 2nd in Mosport driving the Team Pelfrey / Justice Brothers Products / Trademark Garage Floors Mazda. Andries,

after a difficult Round 1, found his pace and was 2nd in Rounds 2 and 3 (set fastest lap of the race), then started from the pole and finished 3rd in Round 4 and 4th in Round 6 (again with the fastest race lap). He races the #81 Team Pelfrey / Lithionics Battery / GS610 Brake Fluid / Trademark Garage Floors Mazda.

"The Grand Prix de Trois-Rivières is a fantastic event," says Andries. "The French-Canadians are rabid open wheel fans so the race takes on the feel of a festival. One thing they do after each race is they take the podium finishers on a "lap of honor" sitting on the back of a convertible to wave to the crowd. It is just a great atmosphere to race in."

The other two-race winner so far this season is Sage Karam, the 2010 USF2000 champion who is racing the 2011 Star Mazda Championship season with scholarship funding from the Mazda Road to Indy. The Nazareth, Pennsylvania native is currently 5th in the championship having won back-to-back oval track victories in Rounds 4 (Milwaukee) and 5 (Iowa Speedway). And though various mechanical problems relegated him to a 13th-place finish at Mosport, he did start from the pole in his #88 Andretti Autosport / MAZDASPEED / Comfort Revolution Mazda.

The pool of talent and experience that makes up this year's grid for the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear is as deep as it has ever been, and fans at the GP3R are assured of two exciting races. On-track action begins with practice from 1:15-2:00 pm ET on Friday, August 5. Qualifying for Race



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1 takes place from 5:50-6:35 pm Friday evening. Race 1 will take the green light for the series' traditional F1-style standing start at 1:00pm Saturday, August 6. With each driver's fastest lap during the race used to set the grid for Race 2, there will be no additional qualifying session and the green light for the second race of the weekend will flash at 11:00 am Sunday, August 7. All times are Eastern.

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.

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