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CHAMPIONSHIP LEADER VAUTIER ON POLE FOR ROUND 9 OF THE 2011 STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP AT THIS WEEKEND'S INDY GRAND PRIX OF SONOMA

Infineon Raceway, Sonoma, CA / August 27, 2011 – French racer Tristan Vautier, the current points leader in the 2011 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear, set the tone for the weekend with the



quick time in both of yesterday's pre-qualifying practice sessions for Round 9 at the Indy Grand Prix of Sonoma. And in this afternoon's qualifying session, he and the JDC Motorsports team orchestrated his fourth pole of the season with a perfectly-timed tire change and a clear lap, resulting in a track record time of 1:28.516 in the #5 JDC Motorsports / Cecibon / Circuit du Laquais Mazda.

"Qualifying was very tight and I have to thank the JDC team for giving me a good car and exactly the right strategy on tire change and the timing of my quick lap," said Vautier. "The track is quite hard on tires, and it will change a lot between qualifying and this afternoon's race because of the temperature, so we have to decide if we make any adjustments or leave the car as it is. It's going to be a very intense race and to win you must do not only drive fast, but do everything exactly right. This is very hard, but the team is working very well together and we feel confident."

If fact, the qualifying battle was so intense and the times so close, that the top-4 qualifiers all broke the previous track record of 1:28.795 set by Pablo Donoso in 2005, the last time the Star Mazda Championship competed at Infineon Raceway. Starting on the outside of the front row, the first front-row start of his Star Mazda career so far, is California racer Gustavo Menezes, an international karting star who made the jump directly to Star Mazda. His lap of 1:28.580 in his #28 Juncos Racing / Truecar / Safety Park Mazda was just .064-sec off the pole time and represented a significant step up in his level of competitiveness.

"This was a very good jump for me this season," said Menezes. "I'm very happy because this was my best qualifying session yet. We were able to put together very strong laps, and I didn't even know I was fastest at one point until Ricky (Juncos) told me on the radio! It was very close, but I'm in a good starting position for the race and J.V. (Horto) is starting right behind me in fourth, which is also exciting. I am starting on the front row for one of my home races, so I'm going to fight hard for a win, or at the very least, a podium finish. Hopefully Juncos Racing can have a 1-2-3 finish! We have worked really hard, and we are right there, so I can't wait to get out there for the race."



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Shaving things even closer to grab the third starting spot was another California racer, Connor De Phillippi, the only three-race winner so far this season. He was just 0.76 off the pole – and .012 off the front row -- with a lap of 1:28.592 in the #11 Team Pelfrey / Justice Brothers Products / Trademark Garage Floors Mazda. And rounding out the 'fast four' was Brazilian driver Joao Victor Horto, who scored his first Star Mazda victory in Round 6 at Mosport; his lap of 1:28.757 in the #7 Juncos Racing / Programa Leilões Mazda will see him starting on the outside of the front row.

The quickest qualifier in the Expert Series for driver 30 and older was Irish-born racer Patrick O'Neill, who was the only member of the current field who was also on the grid the last time the Star Mazda Championship raced at Infineon in 2005. His lap of 1:30.206 in the #64 AIM Autosport / JDC Racing / O'Neill Construction Mazda was good for 11th on the starting grid. Larry Pegram, the AMA Superbike racer who also competes in the Star Mazda Championship in the Expert Series will line up 13th on the grid with a lap of 1:30.636 in the #72 AIM Autosport / Tampa Bay Jaw Surgery / Foremost Insurance Mazda.

| Pos | No. | Name | Best Tm | Best Speed | In Lap | Diff | Gap | Sponsor |
|-----|-----|---------------------|-----------|------------|--------|-----------|-----------|--|
| 1 | 5 | Tristan Vautier | 1:28.516 | 93.664 | 4 | | | Cecibon, Circuit du Laquais, Fontanel |
| 2 | 28 | Gustavo Menezes | 1:28.580 | 93.597 | 4 | 0.064 | 0.064 | www.truecar.com / Truecar, Inc. |
| 3 | 11 | Connor De Phillippi | 1:28.592 | 93.584 | 8 | 0.076 | 0.012 | Justice Brothers Products / Trademark Garage Floors |
| 4 | 7 | J.V. Horto | 1:28.757 | 93.410 | 4 | 0.241 | 0.165 | Programa LeiLoes, Athlete of Christ |
| 5 | 81 | Nick Andries | 1:28.830 | 93.333 | 5 | 0.314 | 0.073 | Lithionics Battery / GS610 Brake Fluid / Trademark Garage Floors |
| 6 | 88 | Sage Karam | 1:29.111 | 93.039 | 3 | 0.595 | 0.281 | MAZDASPEED / Comfort Revolution |
| 7 | 10 | Tatiana Calderon | 1:29.154 | 92.994 | 4 | 0.638 | 0.043 | JAC Motors |
| 8 | 77 | Zach Veach | 1:29.293 | 92.849 | 5 | 0.777 | 0.139 | |
| 9 | 39 | Joao Jardim | 1:29.872 | 92.251 | 5 | 1.356 | 0.579 | |
| 10 | 27 | Nick Mancuso | 1:29.928 | 92.194 | 7 | 1.412 | 0.056 | |
| 11 | 64 | Patrick O'Neil | 1:30.206 | 91.910 | 8 | 1.690 | 0.278 | |
| 12 | 20 | Carlos Linares | 1:30.412 | 91.700 | 7 | 1.896 | 0.206 | Mindeporte |
| 13 | 72 | Larry Pegram | 1:30.636 | 91.474 | 9 | 2.120 | 0.224 | Foremost Insurance / Tampa Bay Jaw Surgery |
| 14 | 29 | Phil Fogg | 1:30.883 | 91.225 | 6 | 2.367 | 0.247 | |
| 15 | 55 | Mikael Goikberg | 1:30.959 | 91.149 | 12 | 2.443 | 0.076 | |
| 16 | 65 | J.W. Roberts | 1:31.277 | 90.831 | 12 | 2.761 | 0.318 | |
| 17 | 23 | Walt Bowlin | 18:25.901 | 7.497 | 1 | 16:57.385 | 16:54.624 | Tampa Bay Jaw Surgery |

The last time the teams and drivers of the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear raced at the 2.52-mile, 12-turn Infineon Raceway road course was in 2005 – and 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



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Mazda win. All are now racing in IndyCar. The 1-hour race, Round 9 of the 2011 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear season, is scheduled to take the green light at 5:00 pm Saturday afternoon.

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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Live timing: <http://livetiming.net/StarMazda/>

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:

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Dean Case / Communications Officer / MAZDASPEED Motorsports / (310) 318-4582

E-mail: MAZDASPEED@MazdaUSA.com



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