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-- SHOOTING STARS IN THE STREETS OF BALTIMORE --

Star Mazda Championship is the college varsity of IndyCar racing and the hottest young drivers from around the world will show their skills in the inaugural Grand Prix of Baltimore

Baltimore Grand Prix / August 30, 2011 – Baltimore is a city well-accustomed to its place in the history books, but this weekend a new chapter – a fast, colorful chapter full of howling cars and shooting stars – is

going to open with the inaugural Grand Prix of Baltimore and the 12-turn, 2.4-mile street circuit that incorporates two downtown Baltimore landmarks -- the Inner Harbor and Oriole Park at Camden Yards.



THE INAUGURAL 2011 **BALTIMORE** GRAND PRIX



Given the historic nature of the weekend it seems appropriate that the longest continuously-operating road racing series in North America, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear, should be right in the middle of the action. Now in its 21st year of developing top drivers for IndyCar, including graduates such as Marco Andretti, Graham Rahal, James Hinchcliffe and Raphael Matos, the Star Mazda Championship is the college varsity of IndyCar racing, a high-speed, high-tech

training ground for the future stars of the sport.

And this weekend top drivers from six different countries will be showing their skills, and courage, in the concrete canyons of the brand-new Grand Prix of Baltimore street circuit. There are four race winners in the field this weekend, including championship points leader Tristan Vautier of Grenoble, France with three wins in the #5 JDC Motorsports / Cecibon / Circuit du Laquais Mazda – including last-weekend's race at the Indy Grand Prix of Sonoma. Vautier has finished every race of the season in the top-5, scored four poles and is driving for a team that has won the Star Mazda series championship several times, including 2007 with Dane Cameron and 2009 with Adam Christodoulou.

Also high on the list is Californian Connor De Phillippi, second in the championship with three wins in the #11 Team Pelfrey / Justice Brothers Products / Trademark Garage Floors Mazda. He has won two of the three street circuit races on the schedule so far this season, so if there's a list of leading contenders going into this weekend, he's on it. Like Karam, he came up through the ranks of the Mazda Road to Indy driver development program; he won the 2009 Skip Barber Pro Series and used his scholarship to move up and race in the Star Mazda Championship in 2010.



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Attention must also be paid to De Phillippi's Team Pelfrey teammate, Nick Andries. He is 3rd in the championship with five podium finishes driving the #81 Team Pelfrey / Lithionics Battery / GS610 Brake Fluid / Trademark Garage Floors Mazda. While he hasn't won a race yet, it's only a matter of time... and this weekend could well be that time.

Both De Phillippi and Andries drive for one of the most unique teams in the series, Team Pelfrey, an IndyCar team from 1998-2001 noted for giving young drivers their 'big break.' Team owner Dale Pelfrey sold his aerospace business and has revived the team as a 2-car Star Mazda effort... with an eye on graduating to Indy Lights and then IndyCar in the next couple of years.

Also on the must-watch list is Brazilian driver João Victor Horta, fourth in the championship battle with one win driving the #7 Juncos Racing / Programa Leilões Mazda) and Sage Karam, fifth in the points battle with two wins in the #88 Andretti Autosport / MAZDASPEED / Comfort Revolution Mazda. It should be noted that Karam won the 2010 USF2000 national championship and is racing in Star Mazda this season with scholarship funding from the unique Mazda Road to Indy driver development program. Andretti Autosport is the only team running efforts at each level of the Mazda Road to Indy, USF2000, Star Mazda and Indy Lights.

Drivers of interest also include the lone female competitor in the Star Mazda field, 17 year-old Colombian karting star Tatiana Calderon. She drives for Juncos Racing, the team that won the 2010 championship with Conor Daly. She is in her second year of Star Mazda competition and is currently 7th in the championship with two podium finishes and seven top-10s driving the #10 Juncos Racing / JAC Motors Mazda. And Gustavo Menezes, a top international kart racer took a big jump into big shoes moving directly from karting to the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear... a move comparable to graduating directly from middle school to college. But his competitiveness increases with each race; he astonished the field by qualifying on the outside of the front row for the start of last week's race at the Indy Grand Prix of Sonoma. He is currently 6th in the championship with top-8 finished in every race.

In the Expert Series, a race-within-a-race for drivers 30 and older, points leader J.W. Roberts (computer company CEO) has four in-class victories racing the #65 Team GDT / General Data Tech Mazda, racing dentist Walt Bowlin has one in-class win his #23 AIM Autosport / Tampa Bay Jaw Surgery Mazda and Larry Pegram(left), one of the top AMA Superbike racers in the world, has three Expert Class wins in the #72 AIM Autosport / Tampa Bay Jaw Surgery / Foremost Insurance Mazda... including last weekend at the Indy Grand Prix of Sonoma. This class is always particularly



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interesting to watch as it pits 30-something computer company CEOs, doctors and entrepreneurs in wheel-to-wheel competition against top young drivers from around the world.

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 has been on a highly-compressed schedule. Last weekend's exciting Indy Grand Prix of Sonoma was Round 9; this weekend's Baltimore Grand Prix is Round 10 and the season finale takes place at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca on September 18 with the American Le Mans series.

Drivers are competing for a year-end prize fund valued at \$1.5 million, including scholarship funding from the Mazda Road to Indy for the Star Mazda series champion to move up and race in the 2012 Indy Lights series. 2010 series champion Conor Daly, son of racing legend Derek Daly, used his scholarship for a mixed season of Indy Lights and GP3 competition in Europe.

The Star Mazda Championship is unique in that, unlike IndyCar and Indy Lights, it uses a Formula One-style 'standing start.' Drivers line up on the grid two abreast in qualifying order and wait for the red LED panels on the pit wall to turn green... and once they do, it's a flat-out, tire-smoking drag race into the first turn. The 1-hour race, Round 9 of the 2011 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear season, is scheduled to take the green light at 11:00 am Sunday, Sept. 4.

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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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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