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THREE OF FOUR SERIES TITLES STILL UP FOR GRABS AS THE STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP HEADS TO THE 2011 SEASON FINALE AT MAZDA RACEWAY LAGUNA SECA

Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca / September 12, 2011 – Wrapping up one of the most competitive seasons in years, the 2011 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear heads to the season finale with the American Le Mans Series at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca this weekend... and three of the four series titles – Series Champion, Expert Series Champion and Team Championship – still up for grabs.



Continuing a battle they began last year, championship leader Tristan Vautier and Connor De Phillippi are the only two drivers still in the hunt for the overall series championship and the 2012 Indy Lights ride that comes with it, a much-coveted prize funded by a scholarship from the Mazda Road to Indy driver development program. Vautier, from Grenoble, France, leads the battle 392 points vs. 354 for Connor De Phillippi of San Clemente, CA. With 46 points available (44 for first, 1 for pole and 1 for fastest race lap), De Phillippi will need not only to drive the race of his life, but will need to have some serious bad luck befall his adversary... but anyone who has been in racing long enough knows that the oddest things happen in the last race with the championship on the line.

Vautier (left) came to race in Star Mazda in 2010 with an already-impressive resume of competition in European open-wheel 'ladder series.' He finished 5th in the championship last year with two wins, four podiums and ten top-10s. His season was compromised by three bad races, including a 13th here at Mazda Raceway (after qualifying 3rd), a 19th at Autobahn and 13th at Road America. This year, driving the #5 JDC Motorsports / Cecibon / Circuit du Laquais Mazda, he has scored four wins so far this season, scored six podiums and finished every race in the top-5... no bad races at all. It is of such stuff that championships are made.

De Phillippi (right), the 2009 Skip Barber Pro Series champion, moved up to the Star Mazda Championship in 2010 with funding from the Mazda Road to Indy and finished 3rd in the championship



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with one win (the season finale at Road Atlanta), three podiums and eleven top-10 finishes... including 4th at Mazda Raceway. His Waterloo came with an 11th at Autobahn and 15th at Trois-Rivières. This season, driving the #11 Team Pelfrey / Justice Brothers Products / Trademark Garage Floors Mazda, he won the opening round at St. Petersburg, won from the pole at the Night Before the 500 at the Lucas Oil Raceway oval, and won again at Trois-Rivières. He has finishes on the podium five times, and scored seven top-6 finishes. However he also has two 10ths and one 11th-place finish on his scorecard... and those are the reason he has the uphill battle this weekend.



The prestigious 'Rookie of the Year' honors already belong to Andretti protégé Sage Karam (left, the youngest driver in the series) who was the 2010 USF2000 champion and is racing in Star Mazda with scholarship funding from the Mazda Road to Indy. Karam's season so far includes two wins, both on ovals (the Milwaukee Mile and Iowa Speedway) four podium finishes and eight top-10s, all at the controls of the #88 Andretti Autosport / MAZDASPEED / Comfort Revolution Mazda. His one bad race was a 14th in the season opener, but he still has enough points to

clinch the title.

This battle might have gone down to the final race as well with Gustavo Menezes -- the second-youngest driver in the series), who made the jump directly from the top levels of international karting to the Star Mazda Championship – giving Karam a fight. However, in Round 11 at the Grand Prix of Baltimore, Menezes, driving the #28 Juncos Racing / Truecar / Safety Park Mazda, he was found to have made several blocking moves – strictly prohibited in Star Mazda championship competition – and was stripped of his 4th place finish and all points. This dropped him from ROY contention.

The Star Mazda Championship is unique in having an Expert Series for drivers 30 and older in whom the competitive fire still burn brightly. There is a race-within-a-race in which they drive the same cars and compete with the same top young drivers for finishing position, but are also scored separately and the in-class winner joins the top-3 on the podium for the interviews, hat dance and champagne spraying. The



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champion in this class in 2010 was Texan J.W. Roberts (far right), a computer company CEO who is both owner of and driver for Team GDT. This year he again leads the Expert Series championship with 218 points and four in-class wins. His principal competition is Walt Bowlin, the racing dentist from St. Petersburg, FL with two in-class wins. However, Bowlin will not be racing at Mazda Raceway, so Roberts will clinch his second consecutive Expert Series championship the instant the race start.

In the Team Championship, which is decided by over the course of the season by a composite of the finishing positions of the top-2 drivers on the team, three teams are still in the running. Leading is rookie squad Team Pelfrey, a former IndyCar team from 1998-2001 that has now reformed and is working its way back up to IndyCar via the Star Mazda Championship and its two drivers, Connor De Phillippi and his teammate Nick Andries. Third in the championship and certain to be battling his teammate to move up to 2nd, Andries started off brilliantly, from the outside of the front row in the season-opener, but went off in the first turn of the first lap to finish 16th. The lesson was quickly learned, however, and he put together a very respectable season with six podium finishes, one pole and two fastest race laps driving the #81 Team Pelfrey / Lithionics Battery / GS610 Brake Fluid / Trademark Garage Floors Mazda.



Second in the team championship is Juncos Racing, the South American squad based in Vero Beach, Florida that destroyed all the series records in 2010 with a championship winning campaign for Conor Daly, son of F1 and IndyCar racing legend Derek Daly. His season included seven wins and nine starts from the pole. This year, running a 4-car team of talented young drivers, their best finish was a win in Round 6 by Brazilian racer João Victor Horta, his first Star Mazda victory ever in the #7 Juncos Racing / Programa Leilões Mazda' they also scored nine podium finishes, distributed among their other drivers, including Gustavo Menezes, Colombian driver (and the only female in the series) Tatiana Calderon in the #10 Juncos Racing / JAC Motors Mazda, and Chilean driver Martin Scuncio in the #60 Juncos Racing / Bia Comunicaciones / Cable Del Pacifico Mazda.

The third team in the championship battle is JDC Motorsports, which is fielding the championship-leading effort for Tristan Vautier. This team has won multiple championships, including 2007 with Dane Cameron and 2009 with Adam Christodoulou; both drivers have gone on to professional careers. JDC's record this year includes four wins (all Vautier), six podium finishes (all Vautier) and 24 top-10 finishes distributed



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among their other drivers, including Brazilian racer João Jardim in the #39 JDC Motorsports / Shopping M Mazda, Nick Mancuso in the #27 JDC Motorsports / Indeck / Jimmy John's / Lake Forest Sportscars Mazda and Chris Miller in the #85 JDC Motorsports / Miller Milling / Red Line Oil Mazda.



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 Mazda Road

to Indy offers scholarships for the USF2000 champion to move up to the Star Mazda Championship; for the Star Mazda Champion to move up to Indy Lights; and for the Indy Lights champion to move up to IndyCar.

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.

On-track action for the drivers and teams in the Star Mazda Championship begins Thursday, Sept. 15 with two 'promoter test sessions,' one in the morning and another just after lunch. The cars again take to the track on Friday, Sept. 16 with early morning and just-after-lunch practice sessions. There is no on-track activity Saturday, Sept. 17, but on Sunday, Sept. 18, qualifying will take place from 8:00 am to 8:45 am, with the 45-minute season finale scheduled to get the green light at 10:40 am.

The 2011 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear awards banquet will take place Sunday evening, Sept. 18 at The Clement Monterey Intercontinental Hotel (750 Cannery Row). The evening begins with a reception at 6:00 pm, dinner at 7:00 pm and the awards ceremony at 8:00 pm.

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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