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EXPERIENCE vs. HUNGER – THE BATTLE FOR THE 2012 STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP PRESENTED BY GOODYEAR COMES TO THE INDY GRAND PRIX OF ALABAMA FOR ROUND 2 THIS WEEKEND

Barber Motorsports Park / March 28, 2012 – The battle for the 2012 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear has been well and truly joined, and it seems to be shaping up as a battle between experience and hunger, between drivers who have a season or two of experience in Star Mazda vs. hungry young rookies with raw speed and a willingness to push the envelope right to the ripping point.



Most of the events on the Star Mazda 10-weekend, 17 race schedule this year are double-headers, two races on one weekend with the quick lap for each car in Race 1 setting the all-important starting grid for Race 2. Last weekend at the Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, California racer Connor De Phillippi (#2 Juncos Racing / ModSpace Racing / One24 Mazda), now in his third season of Star Mazda and by far the most experience driver in the field, won Race 1 from the pole, but only turned the 7th-fast lap of the race and so began Race 2 buried in the field. The English rookie who finished 2nd in Race 1, Jack Hawksworth (#82 Team Pelfrey / TORGOEN Swiss Watches / EXA Networks Mazda), set the quick lap of the race and thus started from the pole in Race 2... and won.

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So the circus comes to Round 2 at this weekend's Indy Grand Prix of Alabama with the score Experience 1, Hunger 1. Now mix in that De Phillippi was unofficially smashed the Star Mazda lap record here in the series' Spring Training two weeks ago, and he's got to be the favorite, right? Yes, except that he finished 10th in this race last year... and there are six other drivers in the field this year that are back again for a shot at the title, including Carlos Linares (#20 Linares Racing / Mindeportes Mazda) who finished 5th last year, Martin Scuncio (#22 Juncos Racing / Pullman Bus Mazda) who finished 11th but was in the mix for the win during both races at St. Pete, and Sage Karam (#88 Andretti Autosport / Comfort Revolution Mazda), who finished in the top-10 here last year, went on to win two races and become Rookie of the Year.

Also on the roster of Barber Motorsports Park veterans are Gustavo Menezes (#83 Team Pelfrey / TrueCar.com Mazda), Jerimy Daniel ((#10 The Racing Company / FixAuto Mazda) and USF2000 standout Zach Veach (#77 Andretti Autosport / Zakoski Data Backup Mazda) who drove two Star Mazda races last season and finished on the podium in the season finale at Mazda Raceway. Also on the list Walt 'the racing dentist' Bowlin (#23 AIM Autosport / Tampa Bay Jaw Surgery Mazda) and, last but certainly not



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least, Larry Pegram (#72 AIM Autosport / Foremost Insurance Mazda), a top AMA SuperBike racer who competes on both 2 and 4-wheels and will be back at Barber in June to compete in the Superbike Classic.

A strong lineup for Team Experience, but Team Hunger has not only Hawksworth, but also Finnish rookie Petri Suvanto (#81 Team Pelfrey / Mazda Road to Indy Mazda / RKM Building Mazda), who won the 2011 USF2000 National Championship and is racing in Star Mazda with \$350,000 of scholarship funding from the Mazda Road to Indy, the official driver development program of IndyCar. He finished 5th and 3rd at St. Pete, looked very racy all weekend and set the 2nd-quick time here in Spring Training. Gabriel 'Gabby' Chaves (#19 JDC Motorsports / OMP Mazda) is another name to reckon with; a Rookie in Star Mazda and American Racing, but also a top European open-wheel racer with experience in both Italian F3 and GP3 and he was chosen as a member of the 2012 FIA Institute Young Driver Excellence Academy. He finished 4th and 3rd at St. Pete.



Other top contenders in the field this weekend include Skip Barber standout Stefan Rzdzinski (#99 JDC Motorsports / PoweredByAlberta.com) is moving up in class and is one of three Canadians competing in Star Mazda this season, as is Zack Meyer (#66 AIM Autosport / Partners III), a top karter who has driven in several Star Mazda races during the last three seasons; this will be his first full-season campaign and he's driving for AIM Autosport, a Toronto-based team that won the Star Mazda Championship with American John Edwards in 2008. Representing Québec on the grid will be second-year Star Mazda racer Jérimy Daniel (#10 The Racing Company / FixAuto Mazda) who scored six top-10s and finished 10th in the championship last year driving for his family-owned team.

Looking South for rising stars, Juan Piedrahita (#9 JDC Motorsports / Petrosur / GFK Motors Mazda), a Colombian-born driver now living in Mexico City, ran several Star Mazda races in 2010 but decided he needed more experience and went back to USF2000 in 2011 before returning for a full-season campaign this season. Venezuelan racer Camilo Schmidt (#21 Linares Racing Mazda) turns family-owned Linares racing, now in its third season of competition, into a two-car team for the first time. He joins fellow Venezuelan Carlos Linares (#20 Linares Racing / Mindeportes Mazda) who scored eight top-10 finishes last year and was 7th in the championship. Colombian racer Andrés Méndez (#53 Team GDT / GroupKriterion.com / DataFile.com Mazda) joins Team GDT, which is muscling up to fight for the overall championship with the addition of American Ryan Tveter (#33 Team GDT Mazda).





The high-profile 'newbie' in the Star Mazda field this season is the previously-mentioned Finnish racer Petri Suvanto, the 2011 USF2000 champion now driving the #81 Team Pelfrey Mazda with scholarship funding from the Mazda Road to Indy. While racing, the 19 year-old is also completing his mandatory National Service in his native Finland. Suvanto enjoyed an impressive career in karting, beginning at age 5. He claimed race wins and championships at every level, competing throughout Europe, and made the transition to cars in 2010 after winning a scholarship to contest the Formula BMW Europe Championship.



Another driver development program is making its presence felt on the Star Mazda grid in the form of female racer Ashley Freiberg (#91 JDC Motorsports / TrueCar Mazda) driving for 2011 Star Mazda champions JDC Motorsports. Freiberg is a champion kart racer, graduate of the Lyn St. James Driver Development Academy and history making-winner of 25 races in a row competing in the high school varsity of open-wheel racing, the Skip Barber series and one of six female racers being sponsored by the TrueCar 'Women Empowered Initiative,' a multi-year program supporting rising female racers in several series.

Yet another driver development program takes the form of Juncos Racing teammates Bruno Palli (#15 Juncos Racing / Team Viso Venezuela) and Diego Ferreira (#57 Juncos Racing / Team Viso Venezuela) representing "Team Viso Venezuela," an initiative founded by the duo's Venezuelan manager and IZOD IndyCar Series driver E.J. Viso. The program promotes bringing top young Venezuelan racers to compete in the Mazda Road to Indy with the help of Venezuelan supporters. Both drivers have won national championships in their native Venezuela.

This is precisely the sort of progression upward of stellar young talent that will produce a new golden age of IndyCar racing – and the talent pool for the 2012 Star Mazda Championship is both deep and diverse, including male and female racers ranging in age from 16 to 50-something, and representing three continents and eight countries, including the U.S., Canada, Mexico, England, Finland, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela and Argentina.

The 2012 Star Mazda Championship schedule includes 17 races on 10 weekends, most of them with IndyCar and many of them – including the Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, will be double-headers with standard qualifying for Race 1, but the starting order for Race 2 being set by each driver's fastest lap in Race 1. All of the races will be broadcast, on the Discovery Channel's Velocity TV in the U.S. and on ESPN International globally.

The U.S. format will be a 1-hour show called the Mazda Motorsports Hour, airing weekly beginning in April, that features highlights from Star Mazda, USF2000 and Playboy MX-5 Cup races. Internationally,





the entirety of one race on a double-header weekend will be shown, with highlights from the other race. To check U.S. and international air dates and times, go to the Star Mazda Television icon on www.StarMazda.com. And all of the cars in each Star Mazda race will be carrying a pair of Replay XD1080 cameras, one in a forward-facing 'shark fin' on top of the roll hoop, the other placed wherever the team wants. Footage will be used for the TV broadcasts, and for driver training.

A substantial field of cars is set to line up on the grid for a pair of the thrilling Star Mazda F1-style 'standing starts,' and all of them will be battling for the champion's share of a Star Mazda prize fund valued at \$1.2 million, including cash awards and scholarship funding totaling approximately \$660,000 from the Mazda Road to Indy to help the champion move up and compete in the 2013 Indy Lights series.



Last year's Star Mazda champion, Tristan Vautier (who won his Indy Lights debut at St. Pete), will also be competing this weekend, driving the #77 Sam Schmidt Motorsports Indy Lights car, sponsored by the Mazda Road to Indy. And just to take it the final step, the 2011 Indy Lights champions, Josef Newgarden, will be making his first IndyCar start this weekend as driver of the #67 car for Sara Fisher Hartman Racing. Other Star Mazda graduates who will be lining up on the IndyCar grid this weekend include Graham Rahal, Marco Andretti and 2011 IndyCar Rookie of the Year James Hinchcliffe, taking Danica Patrick's seat in the GoDaddy.com car at Andretti Autosport.

Rest assured that the drivers in the 2012 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear are well aware of the opportunity that confronts them, and expect to see wheel-to-wheel, give-no-quarter racing right from the first turn of the first lap of the first race.

All those firsts will take place this weekend at the Indy Grand Prix of Alabama, starting with a Star Mazda practice sessions from 8:00--8:30 am and 10:15--10:45 am Thursday, March 29. Qualifying for Race 1 takes place 1:45--2:15 pm Friday, March 30, followed by Race 1 from 4:45--5:25 that evening. There will be no on-track Star Mazda activity Saturday, March 31. Race 2 is scheduled to take the green light for the series' traditional – and always exciting – F1-style standing start at 10:20 am Sunday, April 1. Star Mazda races will be broadcast on Velocity TV and ESPN International; for air dates and times, go to www.StarMazda.com and click the Star Mazda TV icon.





2012 Star Mazda Championship Driver Entry List – Indy Grand Prix of Alabama

Car / Name / Hometown / (Code) / Team Name / Primary Sponsors

- 2 Connor De Phillippi / San Clemente, CA / Juncos Racing / ModSpace Racing / One24
- 9 Juan Piedrahita / Mexico City, Mexico / JDC Motorsports / Petrosur / GFK Motors
- 10 Jérimy Daniel / Châteauguay, Quebec / The Racing Company / FixAuto / Sherwin-Williams
- 15 Bruno Palli / R / Maracay, Venezuela / Juncos Racing / Team Viso Venezuela
- 19 Gabby Chaves / R / Bogotá, Colombia / JDC Motorsports / OMP
- 21 Camilo Schmidt / R / Mérida, Venezuela / #21 Linares Racing / Mindeportes
- 22 Martin Scuncio / Bahia Blanca, Argentina / Juncos Racing / Pullman Bus
- 23 Walt Bowlin / E / Tarpon Springs, Florida / AIM Autosport/ Tampa Bay Jaw Surgery
- 53 Andrés Méndez / R / Bogotá, Colombia / Team GDT / GrupoKriterion.com / DataFile.com.co
- 57 Diego Ferreira / R / Maracay, Venezuela / Juncos Racing / Team Viso Venezuela
- 66 Zack Meyer / R / Toronto, Canada / AIM Autosport / Damis Partners III / Rebus Life
- 72 Larry Pegram / E / Baltimore, OH / AIM Autosport/ Foremost Insurance
- 77 Zach Veach / Stockdale, Ohio / Andretti Autosport / Zakosi Data Backup / ADS IT Solutions
- 81 Petri Suvanto / R / Nurmo, Finland / Team Pelfrey Mazda / Mazda Road to Indy / RKM Building (>)
- 82 Jack Hawksworth / R / West Yorkshire, England / Team Pelfrey / TORGOEN Swiss Watches / EXA Networks
- 83 Gustavo Menezes / Coto de Caza, California / Team Pelfrey / TrueCar.com
- 88 Sage Karam / Nazareth, PA / Andretti Autosport / Comfort Revolution
- 91 Ashley Freiberg / Homer Glen, IL / JDC Motorsports / TrueCar.com
- 99 Stefan Rzadzinski / R / Edmonton, Canada / JDC Motorsports / PoweredbyAlberta.com

Code Key:

E = Expert Series Competitor - drivers 30+

R = Rookie

(>) Petri Suvanto won the USF2000 National Championship in 2011 and is racing in the Star Mazda Championship with primary sponsorship from the Mazda Road to Indy

Note: Entry list may change prior to start of race

Fans can follow the drivers through the course of the weekend via the series' web site at www.StarMazda.com, or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/starmazdaserie> and Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/starmazdaserie>. Follow the actual race on your computer or smartphone at <http://livetiming.net/starmazda/>.

For more information on the Star Mazda Championship and its drivers, as well as the Mazda Motorsports ladder system, please visit www.starmazda.com and www.mazdausa.com. For information, interviews and photos, please contact Star Mazda Communications Director Peter Frey at (818) 398-5733 or StarMazdaPR@aol.com.

