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## PAST AND FUTURE SET FOR A BATTLE ROYAL IN THIS WEEKEND'S STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP DOUBLE-HEADER AT THE 43rd ANNUAL GP3R AT TROIS-RIVIÈRES

Trois-Rivières, Quebec / July 29, 2012 – While the nature of the narrow, highly-technical, heavily-crowned street circuit at Trois-Rivières guarantees that any race will be a 'tempest in a teapot,' this

weekend's Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear double-header promises to be particularly intense with familiar winner from last year locked in a battle royal with a quick – and stunningly successful – newcomer.

To set the stage-- last year, French racer Tristan Vautier started from the pole in Race 1 and scored his second victory of the season. He went on to win the



championship and is again racing at Trois-Rivières, this year in Indy Lights with scholarship funding from the Mazda Road to Indy. In Race 2, with the starting grid determined by each car's quickest lap in Race 1, Vautier again started on the pole, but a rare miscue allowed the Team Pelfrey duo of Connor De Phillippi and Nick Andries to slip by and finish 1-2.

De Phillippi, now driving the #2 Juncos Racing / ModSpace Racing / One24 Mazda, is back to defend his title this weekend, and hopefully to snap a streak of bad luck that has dogged him for the past several races, seeing him fall from first in the championship to fourth thanks to the devil's own brew of mechanical maladies, bad timing and bashings from backmarkers. He has two victories this year, one in the streets of St. Petersburg at the series' season-opener, and another on the Lucas Oil Raceway oval in the prestigious Night Before the 500. But finishes of 7th, 16th, 6th and 13th in the last four races have the talented Californian's championship hopes on the ropes and desperately in need of a return to winning form if he hopes to follow in Vautier's footsteps.

This season's golden boy is a tall, lanky Englishman named Jack Hawksworth, driving the #82 Team Pelfrey / TORGOEN Swiss Watches / EXA Networks Mazda for De Phillippi's old team. And while this will be his first visit to Trois-Rivières, four of his five wins so far this season driving the have come on street circuits. All told, he has six poles, eight fastest race laps and one weekend (the Toronto Indy) where he won both races starting from the pole. Any realistic bet about the leading contender to occupy the top step of the podium this weekend would have to favor Hawksworth.



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That said, auto racing is nothing if not unpredictable, and sentimentalists, nationalists and fans of the underdog will likely be rooting for Québec racer Jérimy Daniel with his home-grown 'The Racing Company' team fielding the #10 The Racing Company / FixAuto / Sherwin-Williams Mazda. Or perhaps even for the other Canadian in the field, Toronto racer Zach Meyer driving the #66 AIM Autosport / Damis Partners III Mazda.

Other likely candidates include Colombian racer Gabriel 'Gabby' Chaves, driving the #19 JDC Motorsports / CLARO / Marca Colombia / Tecpro Mazda and currently second in the points championship. Though he has yet to win, his five trips to the podium, and nine top-5 finishes are a good indicator that he'll make the jump sometime soon – and to have it be this weekend would be no surprise at all.

Third in the championship is American Sage Karam, driver of the #88 Andretti Autosport / Comfort Revolution Mazda. Karam was the 2010 USF2000 national champion and moved up to Star Mazda in 2011 with scholarship funding from the Mazda Road to Indy; he finished 5th in the championship and won 'Rookie of the Year' honor. Now in his second season, he has one win from the pole this year, at the Iowa Speedway oval, five podiums and two poles. All three of his wins in Star Mazda, including two last year, have come on ovals, but his is a constant threat on road and street circuits, including his start from the pole in Race 1 at the Edmonton Indy two weeks ago.

Other drivers with wins this season include the surprise winner in Race 1 at the Edmonton Indy, Camilo Schmidt, a top Venezuelan kart racer who made the jump directly to Star Mazda. He drove his #21 Linares Racing Mazda to his, and the team's, first win in a wet a wild race that saw leader Jack Hawksworth, driving on dry tires in a downpour, taken out by his teammate in Turn 1 of a green/white/checkered re-start after a long full-course yellow. Those who would call him merely lucky must however take into account that he moved up from his 15th place qualifying spot on the grid to 5th overall before the rain started.



Also with one win, in Race 1 on the road course at Barber Motorsports Park, is Chilean driver Martin Scuncio, driver of the #22 Juncos Racing / Pullman Bus / Gobierno Regional del Bio-Biol Mazda. Currently 5th in the championship, he has a mixed record; one win, two podiums, eight top-7 finishes, but also a 16th in Toronto and a 13th in Edmonton. Still, he's a rocket when on form and definitely one to watch.

As are a number of other drivers in the series, including Petri Suvanto, the Finnish driver who won the 2011 USF2000 championship and is racing in Star Mazda with scholarship funding from the Mazda Road to Indy. A victim of bad luck in race 2 at Toronto and Race 1 at Edmonton, he's sixth in the championship with one podium and eight top-6 finishes in the #81 Team Pelfrey / Mazda Road to Indy Mazda. Another



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'stealth' driver with a consistent record of good finishes, with two exceptions, is Colombian racer Juan Piedrahita; two podiums and five top-5s have him sitting 6th in the championship driving the #9 JDC Motorsports / Petrosur / Colombia es pasion / GFK Motors / Lamd Link Mazda. For full results of the season, click [here](#).

Star Mazda on-track action at the GP3R at Trois-Rivières begins with a 40 minute practice session from 1:20 pm -- 2:00 pm Friday, August 3, followed by qualifying for the PEAK Performance pole for Saturday's Race 1 from 5:35 pm -- 6:20 pm. Race 1, scheduled for 45 minutes, will take the green light for the series' spectacular F1-style standing start 1:20 pm - 2:10 pm 45 minutes on Saturday, August 4. Race 2, also a 45-minute contest with the starting grid determined by each car's fastest lap on Race 1, takes the green at 11:00 am on Sunday, August 5.

Star Mazda Championship cars all carry two Replay XD1080 cameras to provide exciting driver POV footage for races that are part of the Mazda Motorsports Hour broadcast tape-delayed on Discovery's Velocity Channel in the U.S. and globally on ESPN International. In the U.S., the race will air on Velocity at 12 Noon, Saturday, September 1. In Canada, the Mazda Motorsports Hour airs on Rogers Sports Net; please check your local listings for date and time, or go to <http://www.sportsnet.ca/tvschedule>.

### **About Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear**

The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear is a part of the [Mazda Road to Indy](#), the official driver development program for IndyCar. The 2012 schedule includes 17 races on 10 weekends, most with IndyCar. Rising stars from around the world are competing on road courses, street circuits and ovals in front of more than a million fans as they compete for prizes valued at \$1.2 million, including a scholarship to move up and race in the 2013 Firestone Indy Lights series. Drivers 16 and older are welcome to compete and the Star Mazda Championship also features the Expert Series for drivers 30 and older. The Star Mazda Championship features standing starts, wheel-to-wheel racing at 160 mph and budgets a fraction of other top open-wheel ladder series. For more information on the Star Mazda Championship please visit [www.starmazda.com](http://www.starmazda.com).

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

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