



AND THEN THERE WERE FOUR – THE 2012 STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP HEADS TO MAZDA RACEWAY WITH FOUR DRIVERS BATTLING FOR THE TITLE AND THE 2013 INDY LIGHTS DRIVE THAT GOES WITH IT

Mazda Raceway / September 4, 2012 – If the level of competition seems extraordinarily intense in the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear race at this weekend's Sports Car Festival Powered by Mazda, you have to keep in mind the stakes these young drivers are racing for – not merely bragging rights as the champion in a prolific and highly-regarded support series, but rather a career-making grand prize worth more than \$600,000... including a full-season-drive in next year's Indy Lights series with scholarship funding from the Mazda Road to Indy.



While this is a sports car weekend, it's also a Mazda-sponsored race at a Mazda-sponsored racetrack and Mazda is involved in more types of racing than any other manufacturer, so fans will have an opportunity to take a look at a small galaxy of rising stars in a Mazda-sponsored open-wheel driver development series, part of the prestigious Mazda Road to Indy.

Many of the drivers you will see this weekend will rise into the top ranks of motorsports, including both IndyCar and Grand-Am. Current IndyCar drivers who graduated from Star Mazda include Marco Andretti, James Hinchcliffe and Graham Rahal; the list of sports car drivers, however, is much longer, including former champions [John Edwards](#) (2008), [Dane Cameron](#) (2007) [Raphael Matos](#) (2005) Michael McDowell (2004) and [Guy Cosmo](#) (2002)... and many more.

The major story this weekend is the battle between the top four drivers in the Star Mazda Championship. Englishman Jack Hawksworth (right), this season's dominant driver (and a rookie, to boot) with seven wins and nine poles, leads by a 61 point margin with a maximum of 93 points remaining. He drives the #82 Team Pelfrey / TORGOEN Swiss Watches / EXA Networks Mazda.





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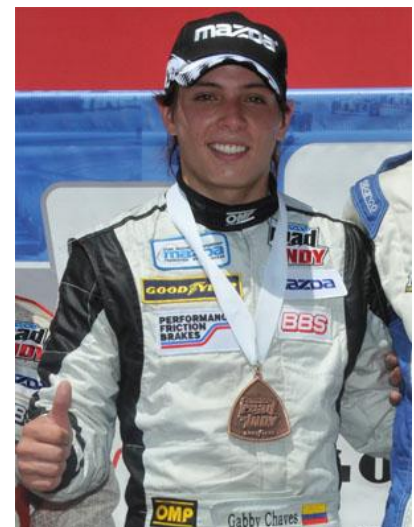


Nazareth, PA native Sage Karam (left / 281 points) was last year's Star Mazda Rookie of the Year and is second in the championship this year, driving the #88 Andretti Autosport / Comfort Revolution Mazda to three wins -- including last weekend at the Baltimore Indy. Colombian rookie Gabriel 'Gabby' Chaves (273 points) is third in the championship with seven podium finishes and twelve top-5s at the wheel of the #19 JDC Motorsports / CLARO / Marca Colombia / Tecpro Mazda, while Californian Connor De Phillippi (259 points) has two wins, two poles and seven podium finishes in the #2 Juncos Racing / ModSpace Racing / One24 Mazda... he also won this race from the pole last year.

Hawksworth, 20, was a top European kart racer before switching to open-wheel cars in 2010. After competing in Formula Renault and being chosen as a British Racing Drivers Club 'Rising Star,' he decided to take a chance on racing in the U.S.... a gamble that seems to be paying off handsomely.

Karam, 17, was the USF2000 champion in 2010 and moved up to race in Star Mazda in 2011 with scholarship funding from the Mazda Road to Indy. He was Rookie of the Year in his first season, and is now a genuine championship contender.

Chaves, 18 (right), was the second-youngest driver ever to win the Skip Barber shootout (Karam was the youngest at 13) in 2007; he won 17 races in a row during the 2007-2008 season... and the championship. In 2009 he won the Formula BMW Americas championship, and then raced in Europe in both F3 and GP3, and is member of the prestigious 2012 FIA



Institute Young Driver Excellence Academy.



De Phillippi (left), 20, was the 2009 Skip Barber Pro Series champion and is the youngest driver and only the second American to win the prestigious Walter Hayes Memorial Trophy. He graduated to Star Mazda in 2010 with scholarship backing from the Mazda Road to Indy, finishing third in the championship and taking Rookie of the Year honors; he finished second in the championship last year. For full results of the season so far, click [here](#).



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Of course, nothing says that one of these four has to win this weekend's race; the talent pool in the 2012 Star Mazda Championship is deep and there are other race-winning drivers this season who'd love to shove the leaders to the side and take center stage; including Chilean driver Martin Scuncio. He won at Barber Motorsports Park in the #22 Juncos Racing / Pullman Bus / Gobierno Regional del Bio-Biol Mazda and is 6th in the championship. This season's other winner is young Venezuelan kart racer Camilo Schmidt who moved directly into Star Mazda and scored his team's first-ever win at the Edmonton Indy driving the #21 Linares Racing Mazda.

Star Mazda on-track action at the Mazda Raceway Grand-Am begins with several test sessions during the Promoter Test Day on Thursday, Sept. 6. Official practice begins with a half-hour session from 8:35-9:05 am, Friday, Sept. 7. Qualifying for the PEAK Performance Pole Award for Race 1 takes place from 1:55-2:25pm Friday afternoon. Race 1, scheduled for 30 minutes, will take the green light for the series' spectacular F1-style standing start 8:00 am Saturday, Sept. 8. Race 2, a 45 minute contest with the starting grid determined by each car's fastest lap on Race 1, takes the green at 3:30pm Sunday, Sept 9.

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, October 10. For information on international and Canadian air times, click [here](#).

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.

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. Follow the series at <http://www.twitter.com/starmazdaseries> <http://www.facebook.com/starmazdaseries> and live timing at <http://starmazda.com/timing>



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