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## Elite Engines to Supply Mazda MZR Engines For USF2000 National Championship

ORLANDO, Fla., Dec. 12 — Officials of the Cooper Tires presents the USF2000 National Championship powered by Mazda announced today that Elite Engines of West Bend, Wis. will be the official engine preparer of the Mazda MZR powerplant that is destined to become the spec engine for the series' top division, the Championship class.

The announcement was made at the Performance Racing Industry (PRI) Show at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla. by Dan Andersen, co-owner and chief executive officer of Andersen Promotions, which administers the series, and Steve Knapp, the owner of Elite Engines. Knapp is also a former Formula 2000 champion (1996) who went on to reach the top ranks of the sport as a driver. He was the third-place finisher and Rookie of the Year at the 1998 Indianapolis 500.

The announcement came just two days after a press conference at the same show disclosed that Mazda will provide a 170-horsepower version of the Mazda

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MZR four-cylinder engine used in the Mazda MX-5 roadster and MAZDA3 for use in the USF2000 series' top class, the Championship division. Sanctioned by the Indy Racing League (IRL), the USF2000 National Championship is one of only two series that are part of both the IRL's Road to Indy ladder system and the MAZDASPEED Motorsports driver development program.

The series' Championship class is open to 2001-2010 Van Diemen chassis. In 2010 these cars may be powered by either a Zetec 2-liter engine or a Mazda MZR engine, but beginning in 2011 only the Mazda powerplant will be used in the top class.

The series' "B" class, which is called the National class, includes Van Diemens as well as any other chassis that conforms to current SCCA Formula Continental class regulations. National class cars will only use the Zetec 2-liter engine in 2010.

Elite Engines will ship the Mazda engines to Andersen Promotions' headquarters at Andersen RacePark in Palmetto, Fla., which will then sell the engines to the teams competing in the series. Elite Engines will also provide on-site service and technical support at all 12 of the series' races in 2010, which will be contested over seven weekends beginning with a doubleheader March 27-28 in St. Petersburg, Fla. in support of the IZOD IndyCar Series headliner.

Since Knapp formed Elite Engines in 1991 his company has won 26 SCCA national championships. In addition to preparing the engines for competition, Elite Engines is designing and fabricating many components for the engine at its 10,000-square-foot shop in Wisconsin, which is equipped with state-of-the-art Haas CNC Machining Centers. Elite Engines will also supply conversion kits so older Van Diemen chassis can be fitted with the Mazda engine rather than the previously standard Zetec.

Knapp is pleased about his company's role as a key partner to both Mazda and the USF2000 National Championship. "It's a 2009 engine, so the engineering is all current," he noted. "It's an all-aluminum engine, and Mazda is known for its quality.

"We've been working on this type of engine since the class started in 1987," Knapp added. "Our company has worked on two generations of Ford engines and now we'll be working on a third generation with this Mazda."

Knapp said he's also excited about the project because of the role he'll play in helping to prepare future stars. "When I look back on my own racing career, the year I won the

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USF2000 championship, 1996, was the most fun I had as a driver,” he said. “Now I get the chance to look at it from a different perspective. It’s going to be fun to watch the kids come up through the ranks just like I did.”

“I’ve known Steve Knapp for at least 15 years,” Andersen said. “I’ve worked with him as an owner/entrant when we ran the series previously, and I’ve also been his customer for engines. His products are exceptional. His ethics, skills and service made Elite Engines the best choice to deliver the new Mazda engines for our series.”

For more information on the series, see [usf2000.com](http://usf2000.com) or call (941) 723-3900. Elite Engines’ Web site is at [eliteengines.com](http://eliteengines.com) and its telephone number is (262) 306-1977.

### ***About Mazda:***

On any given weekend there are more Mazdas on the road courses of America than any other brand of vehicle. MX-5 Miata, RX-8, MAZDA3, MAZDA6, RX-7 and other vintage Mazda models are all popular race cars because every Mazda has the soul of a sports car. In fact, the largest road-racing class in the world is Spec Miata. With more than 2,500 first- and second-generation Miatas tearing up America’s racetracks, it the most-raced production car in the world. Mazda’s involvement in motorsports extends to its relationship with one of the world’s premier road courses, Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in Monterey, Calif., and the Skip Barber Schools for driving and racing.

Celebrating its 40th anniversary in the United States in 2010, Mazda North American Operations is headquartered in Irvine, Calif. It oversees the sales, marketing, parts business and customer service of Mazda vehicles in the United States, Canada and Mexico through nearly 900 dealers. Operations in Canada are managed by Mazda Canada, Inc., located in Ontario. Operations in Mexico are managed by Mazda Motor de Mexico in Mexico City.

### ***About Cooper Tire & Rubber Company***

Cooper Tire & Rubber Company is a global company that specializes in the design, manufacture, marketing and sales of passenger car and light truck tires and subsidiaries that specialize in medium truck, motorcycle and racing tires. With headquarters in Findlay, Ohio, Cooper Tire has manufacturing, sales, distribution, technical and design facilities within its family of companies located in 10 countries around the world. For more information, visit Cooper Tire's Web site at [coopertire.com](http://coopertire.com).