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USF2000 Hires Bonilla and Jorge As Driver Coaches for Series

PALMETTO, Fla., March 13 — As a service to its drivers and as a nod of respect to the series below it on the MAZDASPEED Motorsports driver development ladder, the USF2000 National Championship presented by Cooper Tires and powered by Mazda has hired Gerardo Bonilla and Jonatan Jorge as driver coaches for the 2010 season.

Both Bonilla and Jorge are also coaches for the Skip Barber School and the BF Goodrich/Skip Barber National presented by Mazda. Bonilla has worked with the Skip Barber organization for 12 years, and Jorge for six.

“The USF2000 National Championship is a true training-ground series, and as such we want to be sure to not only provide track time, but also high-level coaching so these young guns can develop quickly into polished racers and be ready for the next step, Star Mazda,” said Dan Andersen, promoter of the USF2000 series. “I’ve worked with both Gerardo and Jonatan in the past. They are both very thorough, professional coaches, and our drivers will learn much from their experience and style.”

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The coaching program will include briefings, drive-arounds, and post-session feedback throughout the 12-race season.

Bonilla was the Skip Barber National champion in 2005. He is also a graduate of the Andersen Racing development system, where he won the Star Mazda expert champion title in 2006. He was the IMSA Lites champion in 2007. He drove in the American Le Mans Series' LMP2 class in 2008.

Jorge won several Brazilian and North American karting championships. He was the runner-up in Skip Barber Regional (2001) and National (2002) competition. He also has experience driving British Formula Renault and British Formula 3 cars.

"My approach for the series will be primarily focused on big-picture concerns for drivers," Bonilla said. "Seminars are likely, as well as focused discussions during drivers' meetings covering issues series officials normally do not address. Seminar and drivers' meeting topics may include professionalism, ethics, technical concerns, strategy, mindset, sponsorship and more. One-on-one coaching will be optional by driver request. I'll be available for questions, long and short, throughout the race weekends."

"I believe the approach will be to make sure all the drivers take care of each other on track, as well as push them to drive the car to its limits with few mistakes," Jorge said. "Being a coach for the entire series should be a great experience to learn a bit from every driver and be able to help each and every one of them, as they all have different needs.

"I'm a big fan of one-on-one coaching; it's more personable and it's easier to get down to the point. I will analyze everyone and find them before they have a chance to come find me," he added with a smile.

Bonilla lives in Orlando, Fla., while Jorge is based in Sarasota, Fla., so both are near the USF2000 headquarters at Andersen RacePark in Palmetto, Fla.

Bonilla speaks both English and Spanish. Jorge is fluent in English, Spanish and Portuguese. Bonilla is originally from Puerto Rico, while Jorge is Brazilian.

USF2000 drivers can reach Bonilla by e-mail at info@gerardobonilla.com and Jorge by e-mail at jjracingdevelopment@gmail.com.

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. Its season-opening doubleheader is coming up March 27-28 on the street course in St. Petersburg, Fla. The compete schedule

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and other information is available on the series' Web site at usf2000.com, or by calling (941) 723-3900.

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.

For more information see MazdaUSA.com.

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.