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National Class Driver Rarick Wins First USF2000 Non-Points Race Sunday At Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca

SALINAS, Calif., May 23 — National class competitor Scott Rarick of Santa Monica, Calif. only led three laps but one of them was the last one, so he won a special 30-minute exhibition race Sunday morning at Mazda Raceway that was administered by the USF2000 National Championship. That series, which is presented by Cooper Tires and powered by Mazda, is part of both the Road to Indy ladder system and the MAZDASPEED driver development program.

There were no USF2000 points up for grabs in this race or a similar one that will be staged here on Sunday afternoon, but the action was so fierce one would have thought the title was on the line.

Rarick, the 2004 SCCA Formula Ford champion, got the lead in the 17-lap race after Martin Sala of Bogota, Columbia reported to the pits for a stop-and-go penalty for jumping a restart. Rarick, who drives for PR1 Motorsports, went on to win the event overall as well as to take the top honors in the National class.

Championship-class winner Mikhail Goikhberg of St. Petersburg, Russia finished second overall, while third overall (and second in the National class) went to

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Miles Maroney of Topanga Canyon, Calif. Maroney and Rarick both drive for PR1 Motorsports, while Goikhberg is a member of JDC MotorSports.

Sala ended up second in the Championship class (seventh overall) for JDC MotorSports, while Ardie Greenamyre was third in that division and tenth overall. The latter is from Louisville, Ky. and he drives for AcceleRace Motorsports.

Another PR1 Motorsports driver, David Cheng of Sammamish, Wash. took the final podium position in the National class as well as fourth overall. National class driver Bob Negrón of Negrón Racing finished fifth overall and will take a special award from Staubli home to Morgan Hill, Calif.

Polesitter Sage Karam of Nazareth, Pa. led the first five laps in his Andretti Autosport car until both Goikhberg and Sala passed him on a restart working lap six. Karam and Veach both passed Sala on the next lap to regain second and third.

Lap 12 proved to be pivotal, as there was a tussle between Goikhberg and Karam and the latter was forced to retire. Veach had to drop out at the same time due to mechanical difficulties. Goikhberg went from leading to ninth place, but he regrouped and had worked his way back up to fourth by the white-flag lap. He passed Maroney and Cheng on the last lap to regain second position.

The lap charts show Goikhberg led laps 6-11; Sala topped the charts from laps 12-14 and Rarick led the rest of the way. Rarick's margin of victory over Goikhberg was just 0.026 of a second.

Three cautions slowed the event.

Karam set the fastest lap of the race to win his second "Cooper Tires, Don't Give Up A Thing Award" for the weekend. He'll start on the pole again in Sunday afternoon's race. His fastest race lap was a new record at 1:25.301. Cheng set a similar record for the National class with a 1:27.812.

Peter Thomas of San Juan Capistrano, Calif. won the Tilton Hard Charger Award for improving the most positions. He started 15th and finished eighth in a National class car fielded by RCC Racing.

PFC gave gift certificates to the car owners of the class winners, PR1 Motorsports and JDC Motorsports.

Post-race quotes follow:

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Scott Rarick (first overall and National class winner): “I got the lead two laps from the end when they black-flagged the 19.

“I had led the class from the start; I passed David Cheng, and then it was just a matter of trying to manage cold tires on the restarts.

“The Cooper tires held up great. I have a Quicksilver-prepped Zetec engine.

Mikhail Goikhberg (second overall and Championship class winner): “I was thankful for the restarts; they helped me.

“I got by Sage right before Turn 1. Then on the second restart I got the lead.

“Sage and I had a moment in Corner 2. My car didn’t get damaged like his did. I fell back but I was able to get back to the top again.

“I’m very happy for JDC MotorSports for the one-two finish [in the Championship class]. They worked very hard.”

Miles Maroney (third overall and second in National class): “It was hard for me to keep up with Scottie. My car was quick in the back sections, but I just wasn’t close enough to get him.

“My car handled great though. My hats are off to my team, PR1 Motorsports.”

David Cheng (fourth overall and third in National class): “Scottie got a good jump on the start. My lap times weren’t quite up to his. Then I made a mistake in Turn 6 once and Miles got me. But it was still a good race for us, and I want to thank my team, PR1 Motorsports.”

Martin Sala (seventh overall and second in Championship class): “It was a really crazy race. Sage was leading, Mikhail was leading, and then I was leading. I got a black flag though because they said I jumped the start. I didn’t think I did, but that was the ruling.

“This was my first time here, and I love this track. I used rFactor to prepare, and it helped a lot.

“We’ll have new tires for this afternoon’s race, which I think will give us an advantage over the Andretti guys because they are going to run used tires I think.”

Ardie Greenamyre: (third in Championship class and 10th overall): “I was third in the

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Championship class. Honestly, I just had to hang on to finish. My right-front wing was damaged at the start in Turn 11. I radioed to my crew to have a look at it when I went by. They were brilliant, and said to come in and they'd just yank it off. They did just that and I didn't lose any positions."

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.

About the Cooper Tires Presents the USF2000 National Championship Powered by Mazda:

Many top drivers in the IZOD IndyCar Series and endurance sports car racing honed their skills in F2000, and the Cooper Tires Presents the USF2000 National Championship Powered by Mazda is an important training ground for rising stars.

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Debuting in 2010, it is the revival of the very popular USF2000 series of 1990 through 2006. Sanctioned by the Indy Racing League, it is the first step on its Road to Indy ladder system, preceding Star Mazda and Firestone Indy Lights.

It is also part of the prestigious MAZDASPEED Motorsports driver development program. The top driver in the series' Championship class earns a scholarship package from Mazda valued at \$350,000 to help him or her advance to Star Mazda the following season.

USF2000 races are contested on road courses, street courses and ovals in order to give the series' drivers experience on all the different types of tracks they will face as they proceed up the ladder.

For more information visit USF2000.com.