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Karam Is Fastest USF2000 Driver in Practice At New Jersey Motorsports Park on Friday

MILLVILLE, N.J., June 25 — Point leader Sage Karam of Nazareth, Pa. set the fastest lap of the day and topped both 30-minute practice sessions for the “Cooper Tires Presents the USF2000 National Championship Powered by Mazda” Friday at Thunderbolt Raceway at New Jersey Motorsports Park.

The Andretti Autosport driver and his fellow competitors will compete in two 30-minute races here Saturday and Sunday. Both are scheduled to start at 2:05 p.m.

The doubleheader will be shown during HDNet’s live coverage of the event, the Mazda Motorsports Festival presented by VisitFlorida.com. The broadcast runs from 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern time both days. Please consult local cable TV listings to find the appropriate channel, or consult hd.net and click on the “watch” tab for more information.

The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear, Cooper Tires Prototype Lites, the Patron GT3 Challenge by Yokohama and the Mazda MX-5 Cup series share the action-packed card with USF2000.

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USF2000 NJMP Practice Report/Page 2 of 3

Live timing and scoring of the USF2000 action is also planned for the series' Web site at usf2000.com.

After events on a temporary street course and two oval tracks, the remainder of the USF2000 series' 2010 schedule is being contested on road courses. In addition to this weekend's doubleheader in the Garden State, HDNet is also booked to provide live coverage of the next doubleheader, which is slated for July 31-Aug. 1 at the Autobahn Country Club in Joliet, Ill.

Karam's fastest lap of the day on Friday came in the morning session when he took just 1:17.288 to travel over the 2.17-mile, 14-turn road course at an average speed of 101.076 miles per hour in the red No. 8, which is sponsored by the Michael Fux Foundation, Comfort Revolution, Bell Helmets, Alpine Stars, Walters Web and Artrotundo.com.

Karam, 15, won both halves of the season-opening doubleheader at the St. Petersburg Grand Prix and last weekend's race at Iowa Speedway.

Patrick McKenna of Dublin, Ireland, who drives for Cape Motorsports with Wayne Taylor Racing, won the oval-track race at O'Reilly Raceway Park May 29. He had the second-fastest lap of the day with a 1:17.432 (100.889 mph), which also occurred in the morning.

Andretti Autosport's Zach Veach of Stockdale, Ohio was third-fastest for the day with a 1:17.786 clocked in the morning.

The times were significantly slower in the heat of the afternoon, when Karam's fastest lap was a 1:18.637 for an average speed of 99.343 mph. JDC MotorSports had the second- and third-fastest times in that session. Raphael Abbate of Sao Paulo was second with a 1:19.078 (98.789 mph) and Mikhail Goikhberg of St. Petersburg, Russia was third with a 1:19.184 (98.656 mph). The three fastest drivers in that session were also the top-three finishers in last Saturday's race at Iowa Speedway.

Qualifying for tomorrow's race will be held at 9 a.m. tomorrow morning. The fastest qualifier will receive the "Cooper Tires, Don't Give Up a Thing Award" and will also be a new track record holder, since this is the series' first event at this track.

The starting line-up for Sunday's race will be determined by each driver's fastest race lap Saturday.

The USF2000 National Championship is part of both the MAZDASPEED Motorsports driver development program and the Indy Racing League's Road to Indy ladder system.

USF2000 NJMP Practice Report/Page 3 of 3

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 the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear the following season.

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 Salinas, 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.

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.