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Karam Sets Fastest Lap in Practice For USF2000 Series Friday at Road America

ELKHART LAKE, Wis., Aug. 20 — Sage Karam set the fastest lap of the day as the drivers of the “Cooper Tires Presents the USF2000 National Championship Powered by Mazda” practiced at Road America Friday in preparation for a doubleheader here Saturday and Sunday.

The 15-year-old Andretti Autosport driver from Nazareth, Pa. took just 2:11.135 to complete the 14-turn, 4.048-mile road course in the first of two practice sessions for the series Friday for an average speed of 111.128 miles per hour. He’s definitely the driver to beat, as he leads the Championship point standings with his red No. 8 Van Diemen Mazda, which is sponsored by the Michael Fux Foundation, Comfort Revolution, Bell Helmets, Alpine Stars, Walters Web and artrotundo.com. His fastest lap of the day was the fifth lap he turned in the morning practice session.

Karam led the afternoon session too with a 2:11.652 (110.692 mph) set on his fifth lap. Karam and the rest of the field pulled into the pits about 10 minutes early in that session due to rain.

Tonis Kasemets of Mundelein, Ill., was the only other driver to hit the 2:11s on Friday, as he was 0.646 of a second behind Karam in the stats for the morning ses-

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sion with a lap in 2:11.781 (110.583 mph) in a Zetec-powered Van Diemen fielded by Pabst Racing Services.

Zach Veach had the third-fastest lap of the day with a 2:12.338 (110.118 mph) set in the afternoon, which was second only to Karam's time for that session. Like Karam, Veach drives for Andretti Autosport. The Stockdale, Ohio-based driver's No. 7 is sponsored by ADS/Retail Pro and Secure IT.

Martin Sala was treated and released from Aurora Health Center in Plymouth, Wis. after he suffered a fracture to his right foot in a single-car crash during the morning practice session. He got out of his JDC MotorSports/Aero Gal/Lubricantes Gulf No. 19 under his own power and also walked into the immediate care facility himself, but X-rays showed a fracture and he was fitted with a removable boot for protection. He is reportedly resting at his hotel tonight and will follow up with his own doctor in Bogota, Columbia next week.

Next on the USF2000 schedule is a half-hour qualifying session at 8 a.m. Central time tomorrow, which will set the grid for the first 30-minute race that will follow at 12:10 p.m. Saturday. Live timing and scoring is planned for USF2000.com, where the complete results for Friday's practice sessions are also posted.

The starting line-up for the second race, which is slated to get the green flag at 8:45 a.m. Central time on Sunday, will be established by each driver's fastest race lap during Saturday's race.

The USF2000 doubleheaders are part of the Time Warner Road Race Showcase, which features an American Le Mans Series headliner. The first two levels of the Indy Racing League's Road to Indy ladder system, USF2000 and Star Mazda, are both in action here at Road America, while the third step, Firestone Indy Lights, is competing as part of the IZOD IndyCar Series show at Infineon Raceway in Sonoma, Calif., this weekend.

USF2000 and Star Mazda, as well as the Skip Barber National series, are all open-wheel series that are part of the MAZDASPEED Motorsports driver development system too. The Skip Barber National series is in action at Road America this weekend too.

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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.