



Andersen RacePark
10101 U.S. Highway 41 North
Palmetto, Fla. 34221
Tel.: (941) 723-3900
Fax: (941) 723-3992
E-mail: info@usf2000.com
Web site: usf2000.com

Media inquiries:
Linda Mansfield, Restart Communications
Cell: (317) 201-0729
E-mail: LKMRRestart@gmail.com

Karam Leads All the Way in Saturday's USF2000 Race at Road America

ELKHART LAKE, Wis., Aug. 21 — Polesitter and point leader Sage Karam of Nazareth, Pa. led all 11 laps to post his sixth victory of the year in the "Cooper Tires Presents the USF2000 National Championship Powered by Mazda" Saturday at Road America, the first half of a series doubleheader that is part of the Time Warner Road Race Showcase.

The non-stop event almost had an Andretti Autosport one-two finish. Zach Veach of Stockdale, Ohio started third but got second at the start and held that position until the last lap, when JDC MotorSports' Mikhail Goikhberg of St. Petersburg, Russia powered by him in Turn 5 and relegated Veach to third place.

Karam's No. 8 Van Diemen Mazda, which is sponsored by the Michael Fux Foundation, Comfort Revolution, Bell Helmets, Alpine Stars, Walters Web and artrotundo.com, was a whopping 9.652 seconds ahead of Goikhberg's No. 10 Van Diemen Mazda at the checkered. Veach, who is sponsored by ADS, Retail Pro and Secure IT, was 0.952 of a second behind Goikhberg at the line.

Both Karam and Veach are 15 years old and neither hold state driving licenses. Karam will go back to Nazareth High School on Monday, while Veach's 2010-2011 OHDela on-line school year starts on Aug. 31.

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Finishing fourth was Dublin, Ireland's Patrick McKenna, who drives the white No. 2 for Cape Motorsports with Wayne Taylor Racing with sponsorship from Motorsport Ireland and Willsborough Transport. Raphael Abbate of Sao Paulo, Brazil rounded out the top five in the JDC MotorSports No. 11, which is sponsored by Avery Dennison and Alphacolor.

The best battle of the event was between Javier Barrales of Concepcion, Chile and Pabst Racing Services' Tonis Kasemets of Mundelein, Ill. Barrales eventually won that tussle to finish sixth in the Fuerza Chile Motorsports/Cape Motorsports with Wayne Taylor Racing No. 18. He also won the \$200 Tilton Hard Charger award, as he started ninth.

David Cheng of Sammamish, Wash., who drives for Z Sports Midwest, and Felix Serralles of Ponce, Puerto Rico, whose car is prepared by Liberty Motorsports, finished eighth and ninth, respectively. Z Sports Midwest's Scott Anderson of Fort Collins, Colo., rounded out the top 10 and also won the Staubli award, which is awarded to a random finisher.

J.R. Smart of Fitchburg, Wis. was the National class winner for Pabst Racing Services and Smart Motors over AcceleRace Motorsports' Ardie Greenamyer of Louisville, Ky. Martin Suncio of Concepcion, Chile, who drives for Cape Motorsports with Wayne Taylor Racing/Fuerza Chile Motorsports, dropped out early, as did Liberty Motorsports' Matthew Powers of Danville, Calif.

PFC gift certificates went to the class-winning teams, Andretti Autosport (\$100) and Pabst Racing Services (\$50).

Karam had a 1.689-second lead by the end of lap one and he stretched it throughout the event. He set the fastest lap of the race on lap five with a 2:11.466 (110.848 miles per hour), so he earned another Cooper Tires "Don't Give Up a Thing" pole for Sunday's race, which starts at 8:45 a.m. Central time. Live timing and scoring is planned for USF2000.com. Goikhberg will be beside him in Row 1, while McKenna and Veach will share Row 2.

Karam won the Cooper Tires pole for Saturday's race with a time of 2:10.765 (111.443 mph), an automatic track record.

Karam now has 252 points to McKenna's 216 in the Championship class point standings, while Goikhberg is third with 157. Abbate is fourth with 147 and Veach rounds out the top five with 123. At stake is a year-end scholarship from Mazda valued at \$350,000 to help the champion advance to the Star Mazda series next year.

Greenamyer leads the National class point standings with 150 points to Smart's 102.

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Andretti Autosport leads Cape Motorsports with Wayne Taylor Racing in the team standings, 247 to 195.

The complete point standings and other information is available on the series' Web site at USF2000.com.

Martin Sala was treated and released from Aurora Health Center in Plymouth, Wis. on Friday 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 will follow up with his own doctor in Bogota, Columbia next week.

Post-race quotes follow:

Sage Karam: "The Andretti Autosport boys put together a masterpiece. I got a good start and then we went into cruise control mode and I just tried to save my Cooper tires. The crew got a little mad at me because they wanted me to slow down, but I had a good rhythm going and it was hard to slow down."

"I want to thank everybody, especially the Michael Fux Foundation, Comfort Revolution, Michael Andretti, Mazda, Cooper Tires, the Road to Indy program and VisitFlorida.com."

Mikhail Goikhberg: "This track is awesome! JDC MotorSports gave me a great car.

"We had a little miscue on the radio and I missed the green completely. I thought everybody was going to get penalized for jumping the start except me, but then I discovered that was not the case and I got going."

Zach Veach: "My tires went away the last couple of laps. We have some changes to make for Sunday's race, but it was a good result and I want to thank Andretti Autosport, Mazda, Cooper Tires and my sponsors: ADS, Retail Pro and Secure IT."

J.R. Smart: "I want to thank Cooper Tires, Mazda, Pabst Racing Services, Smart Motors and my mentor, Tonis Kasemets."

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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 is 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 cooptire.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.