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## The Inaugural Road to Indy Summit Is a Huge Hit with USF2000 Drivers

INDIANAPOLIS, May 28 — The first annual Road to Indy Summit at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway is only half over and already USF2000 drivers are calling it “amazing,” “great,” “fantastic” and “cool.”

Those were the most common adjectives the drivers in the USF2000 National Championship presented by Cooper Tires and powered by Mazda were using to describe their experiences at the Summit during a special reception in a Tower Terrace suite at the track Thursday night. The three-day forum was designed to provide the young drivers with information, contacts, exposure and unprecedented access to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway as they prepare for careers in the IZOD IndyCar Series.

The USF2000 series is the first step on the Indy Racing League’s official Road to Indy series, preceding the Star Mazda Championship powered by Goodyear and Firestone Indy Lights. The series is also part of the MAZDASPEED Motorsports driver development program. The top driver in the Championship class will earn a year-end scholarship from Mazda valued at \$350,000 to help him or her move up to the Star Mazda series in 2011.

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“The Indy Racing League really opened the doors of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway to these young drivers; the whole Summit was invaluable,” said the USF2000 series’ promoter, Dan Andersen. “I don’t know of any development series that has ever offered such an exciting and worthwhile program.”

The Summit began with an autograph session on Wednesday, which was Community Day at IMS. Thursday found the young drivers touring the Hall of Fame Museum with track historian Donald Davidson. Then came tours of the track with either four-time Indy 500 winner Rick Mears or two-time winner Al Unser Jr. A spotters’ seminar preceded the group watching qualifying for Friday’s Firestone Freedom 100, the biggest race of the year for Firestone Indy Lights. A reception where the drivers could mingle with team owners, other drivers and even Randy Bernard, the Indy Racing League’s new chief executive officer, followed.

Today’s schedule started with a breakfast and seminar by Mazda. Jarrod Krisiloff of the Indy Racing League and Firestone Indy Lights driver James Hinchcliffe spoke about ways drivers can use social media to build a fan base and service sponsors. Jim Leo of Pit Fit spoke on physical conditioning. Mazda’s Robert Davis, Jim Jordan, John Doonan and Dean Case then spoke on the business of racing, including marketing and public relations.

The group is then slated to attend a mock drivers’ meeting with Brian Barnhart, the Indy Racing League’s chief operating officer. The young drivers will then watch the Firestone Freedom 100 before heading to O’Reilly Raceway Park to practice in their own cars for Saturday’s Night Before the 500 event, the USF2000 series’ first oval-track race of the year.

Some of the USF2000 drivers fitted additional activities into their schedules too. Point leader Sage Karam was interviewed for the IMS video boards throughout the facility. Patrick McKenna, who is currently second in the point standings, represented the series in a question-and-answer period on the Coke Stage during Community Day. With hundreds of fans listening in the Plaza, the opportunity thrilled the young driver from Ireland so much he had his teammate, Josh Fielding, take pictures for the folks back home.

Zach Veach even sauntered down the runway at the annual CARA (Championship Auto Racing Auxiliary) Charities Fashion Show on Thursday. What impressed him the most about that appearance, however, was the police escort that he and Star Mazda point leader Conor Daly received in order to quickly make their way from the Westin downtown back to the track when the show concluded.

Veach is, one must remember, just 15.

For more information on the series, see [usf2000.com](http://usf2000.com).

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Driver quotes about the Summit gathered at the reception follow:

**Javier Barrales:** “The Road to Indy Summit is great! I think the museum was the best so far, but I also liked doing the laps with Rick Mears and his tips.

“At the museum I liked seeing A.J. Foyt’s cars the best.

“This is my first time at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. The track is amazing. It is so big! It will be something to see all the stands filled with people on race day.

“The access they gave us at the Summit has been amazing. There is nothing like this program anywhere else in the world!”

**Josh Fielding:** “I think the best part of the Road to Indy Summit so far is to be able to see things behind the scenes and to be able to talk to the drivers. I got to see what was happening on pit lane. I’ve never even been to a big track like this before, so it was all new to me.

“I got to talk to Ryan Briscoe and Will Power. They went over some maneuvers on ovals with me and gave me some information that might help me at O’Reilly Raceway Park.

“Seeing the museum was a great experience. Just seeing the history there was great.

“I got to meet Rick Mears and do a lap around the track with him in a pace car.

“I thought the autograph session was cool too because it gave me a look at what can be in the future for me. It helped me feel more comfortable here.

“This whole Summit has been a great help with my people-building skills.”

**Sage Karam:** “The tour of the track with Rick Mears was really cool. We did a slow lap in a Chevy Cobalt, and looked at all the details. He gave me some pointers. He said to always be really smooth with my hands. Hopefully I can take his advice and win the Indy 500 someday.

“It’s great for the USF2000 series to be on the Road to Indy program. Just to give kids an opportunity to see the tracks we hope to race on someday ahead of time is definitely an attention-grabber.”

**Patrick McKenna:** “Getting to be interviewed on the Coke Stage yesterday was amazing, and so was getting to do a lap with Rick Mears today. The spotters’ seminar was pretty good too. I liked being able to be part of the autograph session too. I’ve enjoyed the whole thing.

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“Just to be here is fantastic. I’ve never been involved in anything that’s given me such exposure, and I’ve met a lot of good people. You don’t get a chance to do this in any other series anywhere else; it’s fabulous!”

**Martin Scuncio:** “I think the best thing about the Road to Indy program is that there are clear steps now. First you do USF2000, then you do Star Mazda, then you do Firestone Indy Lights, then you can become an IZOD IndyCar driver.

“Going to the museum today was fantastic. I got to see Jean Manuel Fangio’s car. He’s my idol.

“With the Road to Indy program, if you work hard on it, the contacts will come. The team owners will look at you if you’re part of the Road to Indy program.”

**Zach Veach:** “One of the coolest things we did today was the track ride with Rick Mears. He described a few tips for us to remember. He said it’s important to be smooth, and he told us how to do corrections.

“With the access we had, I was able to get the signatures for all but three of the drivers in this year’s Indy 500 for my Oprah Winfrey No Phone Zone program. I’m missing Sarah Fisher, Dan Wheldon and Simona de Silvestro yet, but I hope to get them tomorrow.

“I’d been to the museum once before, but now that I understand the cars better it was amazing to see how the designs have changed and how far car safety has come.

“I feel very fortunate to be part of the USF2000 series and the Road to Indy program. We’re really being groomed to be an IZOD IndyCar Series driver. The Road to Indy program is one of a kind, and it’s really helping us out.”

### ***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.

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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](http://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](http://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](http://USF2000.com).