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Championship Class Driver Goikhberg Wins Second USF2000 Non-Points Race Sunday At Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca

SALINAS, Calif., May 23 — Mikhail Goikhberg was the Championship class winner Sunday afternoon just like he was on Sunday morning at Mazda Raceway, but in the afternoon he was the overall winner too to conclude a non-points doubleheader in the USF2000 National Championship, which is presented by Cooper Tires and powered by Mazda.

Goikhberg, a native of St. Petersburg, Russia who drives for JDC MotorSports, took the lead from Cooper Tires polesitter Sage Karam working lap 14 and went on to post a 1.699-second victory over the Andretti Autosport driver and USF2000 point leader from Nazareth, Pa. Zach Veach of Stockdale, Ohio, another Andretti Autosport driver, finished third overall and third in the Championship class, just ahead of another JDC MotorSports driver, Martin Sala of Bogota, Columbia.

The top three National class winners finished fifth, sixth and seventh overall and they all drive for PR1 Motorsports. Miles Maroney of Tapanga Canyon, Calif. took the top honors in the 30-minute race in the afternoon over the winner in the morning, Scott Rarick of Santa Monica, Calif., and David Cheng of Sammamish, Wash.

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Veach passed Goikhberg for second on the first lap but Goikhberg regained that spot on the next lap. Karam already had a big lead at that point, and he'd stretched it out to a whopping 7.522-second advantage over Goikhberg by lap six. That advantage disintegrated when a full-course yellow waved on lap seven to retrieve Greg Pizzo's car in Turn 2, however.

Karam survived the restart on lap eight and had a 1-second lead over Goikhberg at the halfway point one lap later. His car had developed an understeer by then, however, and Goikhberg was able to stay within striking distance.

The strike occurred working lap 14, and Goikhberg was never again headed.

Maroney got the National class lead with three laps down by capitalizing on a slight mistake by Cheng. Rarick went with him for second in the class. Cheng was able to regain the final podium position by passing Bob Negron of Morgan Hill, Calif. with 13 laps down in what turned out to be an 18-lap race.

Two Peters received special awards. Peter Hastrup of Madera, Calif. earned the Tilton Hard Charger award and Peter West of Malibu, Calif. earned an award from Staubli. PFC gave gift certificates to the car owners of the class winners, JDC MotorSports and PR1 Motorsports.

The fastest lap of the race records set in the morning were broken in the afternoon. Goikhberg now has those honors for the Championship class with a time of 1:24.566. Cheng set the new mark for the National class with a 1:26.588.

The USF2000 National Championship will hold a points race on the oval at O'Reilly Raceway Park in Indianapolis this coming Saturday night.

More information, including the complete rundown from Mazda Raceway, is available on usf2000.com.

Post-race quotes follow:

Mikhail Goikhberg (first overall and Championship class winner): "I took the lead in the Andretti Hairpin. It felt good to take the lead at that point, considering the car I was racing."

"We have to work on being fast on cold tires. When we accomplish that we can build bigger race leads."

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Sage Karam (second overall and in Championship class): “After the yellow came out my car built up an understeer and I had to back off a bit.

“I’ve never raced here before, so I used iRacing to help me learn the course. I put quite an effort into preparing for this event.”

Zach Veach (third overall and in Championship class): “After a year and a half of testing, it’s good to be racing and to be on the podium!”

Miles Maroney (fifth overall and first in National class): “The wind was a factor this afternoon; it really picked up. But my car’s set-up was phenomenal. I just drove laps and concentrated on doing my thing.

“I would like to run a couple of races in the USF2000 series at the end of the year. We’ll have to see if that is possible.”

Scott Rarick (sixth overall and second in National class): “It was a great weekend overall. My car was still coming in as the race progressed. I wish the race would have been longer.”

David Cheng (seventh overall and third in National class): “It was a good weekend. I made a little mistake in Turn 6 this afternoon which cost me, but my car was even better this afternoon than it was this morning. I want to thank my team, PR1 Motorsports; Mazda and Cooper Tires.

“Maybe I can run some USF2000 National races towards the end of the year. It’s something we’ll definitely consider.”

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

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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.