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McKenna Wins Sunday's USF2000 Race At New Jersey Motorsports Park

MILLVILLE, N.J., June 27 — Patrick McKenna capitalized on polesitter Sage Karam's mistake and posted his second victory of the season in the "Cooper Tires Presents the USF2000 National Championship Powered by Mazda" Sunday afternoon on the Thunderbolt Raceway course at New Jersey Motorsports Park. The 20-lap/30-minute race was the second half of a USF2000 double-header that was part of the Mazda Motorsports Festival presented by Visit-Florida.com. The latter company made the event's live coverage on HDNet possible.

McKenna, of Dublin, Ireland, drives a Mazda-powered Van Diemen prepared by Cape Motorsports with Wayne Taylor Racing. He's sponsored by Motorsports Ireland and Willsborough Transport.

Three drivers from JDC MotorSports finished second through fourth. Mikhail Goikhberg of St. Petersburg, Russia threatened to pass McKenna several times in the late stages of the race but he took the checkered 1.588 seconds after McKenna did. Although he was unable to get around McKenna, he got an extra point for setting the fastest lap of the race with a 1:19.722 on lap six.

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Raphael Abbate of Sao Paulo, Brazil earned his second \$200 Tilton Hard Charger Award in 24 hours by coming from seventh to finish third in his car, which is sponsored by Avery Dennison and Alphacolor. He blasted from seventh to fourth at the start, narrowly missing a tangle that saw the back end of Martin Scuncio's Van Diemen get airborne. Scuncio, a driver from Concepcion, Chile who drives for Fuerza Chile Motorsports, was able to finish the race despite the scary moment at the start, and no caution flags slowed the action.

Martin Sala of Bogota, Columbia finished fourth for his sponsors, Aero Gal and Lubricantes Gulf, while Andretti Autosport's Zach Veach of Stockdale, Ohio rounded out the top five in a car that advertises ADS, Retail Pro and Secure IT. Veach won a \$200 award from Staubli too.

Karam, who also drives for Andretti Autosport, led the first four laps but got off course and punctured a hole in the radiator of his car, which is sponsored by the Michael Fux Foundation, Comfort Revolution, Bell Helmets, Alpine Stars, Walters Web and Artrotundo.com. The loss of coolant affected his car's engine and he had to drop out with five laps complete.

AcceleRace Motorsports' Ardie Greenamyer of Louisville, Ky. had to make an early pit stop for repairs too after he tangled with another driver at the start, but he still won the National class. PFC gave his team a \$50 gift certificate as part of his winnings, and also gave Cape Motorsports a \$100 gift certificate for being the winning team in the Championship class.

McKenna received the bonus point for leading the most laps. Karam still leads the point standings but with Sunday's victory McKenna draws closer, as Karam has 160 points to McKenna's 149. Goikhberg is third in the current point standings.

The same number of points that were up for grabs this weekend in the Garden State will be available at the next doubleheader, which is slated for July 31-Aug. 1 at the Autobahn Country Club in Joliet, Ill. Live coverage by HDNet thanks to VisitFlorida.com is planned for that event too.

For more information see USF2000.com.

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. 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.

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Post-race quotes follow:

Patrick McKenna: “I saw Sage slide wide and go off, and then I could see there was something coming out of the back of his car, and I knew that he was having a problem.

“Mikhail and I had very similar cars, so it was a tough battle. We were definitely a lot more competitive today than we were yesterday, but Mikhail put me under a lot of pressure at the end.”

Mikhail Goikhberg: “I was third yesterday and second today; I wish this was a triple-header!

“Patrick was faster in some places and I was faster in other places. I got close to him a couple times, but then he was able to pull away again. It was a momentum thing.”

Raphael Abbate: “It was very difficult because it was so hot, but we had a good set-up.

“I had a very good start. I took the inside, but I was very close to the Fuerza Chile Motor-sports driver who got airborne. I’m not sure who it was. But I made it through.

“I had another scary moment on the third lap or so when my gearshift knob came off. I had to drive with one hand until I could put it back on!”

Ardie Greenamyre: “The Cooper tires held up fantastic and I really like this track!

“I had to pit on the first lap because another driver clipped my front end off at the start. I tried to get out of his way; it was just a racing incident.”

Sage Karam: “I had a lot of understeer and I dropped a wheel off in Turn 6, and a rock went through my radiator and cracked it, and then I lost power. It was really just my mistake. I was on cold tires and I should have been more careful. I take full responsibility for it, and I feel bad for the whole Andretti Autosport team. But there is a long season left, and I’m looking forward to Autobahn.”

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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.