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Karam Leads Every Lap of USF2000 Race At Autobahn Country Club Sunday

JOLIET, Ill., Aug. 1 — Polesitter Sage Karam of Nazareth, Pa. led all 12 laps to win Round 8 of the “Cooper Tires Presents the USF2000 National Championship Powered by Mazda” in convincing fashion Sunday afternoon during the Harrah’s Autobahn Grand Prix Presented by Mazda at the Autobahn Country Club.

The Andretti Autosport driver had a 2.312-second advantage over the No. 2 Cape Motorsports with Wayne Taylor Racing car driven by Patrick McKenna of Dublin, Ireland at the checkered. Both Karam and McKenna were in Mazda-powered Van Diemens. Tonis Kasemets of Mundelein, Ill., who won a similar race here Saturday, finished third Sunday in a Zetec-powered Van Diemen fielded by Pabst Racing Services.

Karam stretched his advantage to 4 seconds by lap seven and was never threatened with his No. 8, which is sponsored by the Michael Fux Foundation, Comfort Revolution, Bell Helmets, Alpine Stars, Walters Web and artrotundo.com.

The real story was the battle for second. McKenna started in that position only to lose it to Kasemets working lap two. McKenna, who is sponsored by Motorsport Ireland and Willsborough Transport, was in hot pursuit in third place, however, followed closely by Liberty Motorsports’ Matthew Powers of Danville, Calif. and Martin Scuncio, who hails from Concepcion, Chile and drives for Fuerza

USF2000 Sunday Race Report/Page 2 of 4

Chile/Cape Motorsports with Wayne Taylor Racing.

McKenna finally regained second by passing Kasemets on lap six, and from then on the top five positions remained unchanged. Powers was fourth for the second time in 24 hours, while Scuncio received the \$200 Tilton Hard Charger award for his efforts for coming from the eighth starting spot to fifth at the end.

Rounding out the top 10 were Zach Veach of Stockdale, Ohio; Javier Barrales of Concepcion, Chile; Raphael Abbate of Sao Paulo, Brazil, Martin Sala of Bogota, Columbia and the National class winner, Ardie Greenamyer of Louisville, Ky.

Although there were no full-course cautions, Abbate ended up in the outside wall off Turn 1 at the start after contact with one of his JDC MotorSports' teammates, Mikhail Goikhberg of St. Petersburg, Russia. Abbate was able to regroup for a top-10 finish and he received the \$200 Staubli award for this event too. Goikhberg was done for the day, although he still remains in third place in the overall point standings behind Karam and McKenna.

Although Karam dominated, McKenna actually set the fastest lap of the race on lap 11 with a 2:17.051 while he was making one final attempt to catch Karam. The latter had the second-fastest lap of the race when he ran a 2:17.255 on lap seven. Kasemets had the third-fastest lap with a 2:17.381 on the final lap. Abbate had the fourth-fastest lap on lap 10 with a 2:17.608. Scuncio was the only other driver in the 2:17s, as he ran a 2:17.934 on lap six.

J.R. Smart of Fitchburg, Wis. was on hand to congratulate his Pabst Racing Services' teammate, Kasemets, for another podium finish on Sunday. Smart had spent Saturday night in a local hospital for observation after crashing his Smart Motors National class car in Saturday's race.

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

The USF2000 doubleheader, which was part of the Harrah's Autobahn Grand Prix presented by Mazda, was covered live on HDNet.

The next USF2000 doubleheader is Aug. 21-22 at Road America in Elkhart Lake, Wis. Unofficially Karam now leads the Championship class point standings with 219 points to McKenna's 197. 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.

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

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USF2000 Sunday Race Report/Page 3 of 4

Post-race quotes follow:

Sage Karam: "The first couple of laps on cold tires were the key to the victory I think. My car was very good on cold tires, and that helped me get an advantage over Tonis and McKenna. That gave me the opportunity to pull ahead.

"I still had to work with the bars during the race because we had a little understeer, but then I found the sweet spot. I was able to keep a good advantage over second place throughout the race. At the end I backed it down a little, but our Mazda engine was flawless and our Cooper tires were consistent and held up well.

"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.

Patrick McKenna: "I got second from Tonis going into Turn 11. I managed to get a good run on him and then he made a little mistake and I got by him.

"My head surround broke during the race, but it really wasn't that annoying. It came up in some of the corners at times, but it wasn't a big deal.

Tonis Kasemets: "My goal was to bring the car home in one piece and I was on the podium again today, so I have no complaints. I raced really tight with the Irishman, and it was a lot of fun. I'm quite happy. I would like to do the USF2000 races at Road America too, but we'll have to see. I just need a Sugar Daddy or a Sugar Mamma to help make it happen!"

Ardie Greenamyre: "Our transporter is at a go-kart race at New Jersey Motorsports Park this weekend because we're trying to get some programs going for next year, and it's hard when you want to be two places at the same time. I have to thank the series for giving me a hardship lap so I could get a lap in before the races started, because I only drove here once before and that was two years ago.

"The car I drove here this weekend is a 1984 Reynard. I am trying to make the point that if an old guy like me can come out here and win the National class with a car that is more than 25 years old, anybody can come and be a part of the fun!"

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USF2000 Sunday Race Report/Page 4 of 4

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.