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## Point Leader Karam Nabs the Cooper Tires Pole For One More USF2000 Point Thurs. Morning

BRASELTON, Ga., Sept. 30 — Point leader Sage Karam of Nazareth, Pa. won his tenth Cooper Tires “Don’t Give Up a Thing” Pole Award of the season Thursday morning at Road Atlanta in preparation for Round 11 of the “Cooper Tires Presents the USF2000 National Championship Powered by Mazda” Thursday at 5 p.m.

That 30-minute race and another on Friday at 8:45 a.m. are support events for the Petit Le Mans Powered by Mazda2, the season finale of the American Le Mans Series presented by Tequila Patron. The doubleheader is also the USF2000 season finale. Either Karam or Patrick McKenna of Dublin, Ireland will win the series’ top prize for their year’s work — a sponsorship package from Mazda valued at \$350,000 to help the USF2000 champion advance to the Star Mazda series next year. In addition to being part of the MAZDASPEED Motorsports driver development program, both of those series are part of the Road to Indy program.

Driving the Andretti Autosport No. 8 Van Diemen Mazda sponsored by the Michael Fux Foundation, Comfort Revolution, Bell Helmets, Alpine Stars, Walters Web and Artrotondo.com, Karam set an automatic new track record of 1:26.856

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(105.278 miles per hour) on the ninth of 10 laps the 15-year-old driver ran in a 30-minute qualifying session that was slowed twice by red flags totaling about 14 minutes. His qualifying time was about 4 seconds slower than he ran to top both official practice sessions on Wednesday due to a wet track from rain overnight and early Thursday morning, and sprinkles throughout the session.

Series newcomer Luke Ellery of Melbourne, Australia spoiled an Andretti Autosport front row when he qualified second, just 0.849 of a second off Karam's time with a 1:27.705 (104.259 mph) on lap nine. Driving for JDC MotorSports, his car advertises his Web site at [luke-ellery.com](http://luke-ellery.com).

Andretti Autosport, which has already clinched the team title in the Championship class, will see its cars line up behind each other for the start this afternoon as Zach Veach of Stockdale, Ohio qualified third with his No. 7, which advertises ADS, Retail Pro and Secure IT.

McKenna, who drives the No. 2 fielded by Cape Motorsports with Wayne Taylor Racing, brought out one of the red flags when his car got stuck on a curb off Turn 5. After some assistance he made it back to the pits under his own power and in the last few seconds of the session he regrouped to qualify fourth in his Van Diemen Mazda sponsored by Willsborough Transport, Motorsport Ireland and the Irish Sports Council.

Mikhail Goikhberg, Raphael Abbate, Matthew Powers, Javier Barrales and Felix Serralles will start behind the top two rows in that order, with the National class cars of J.R. Smart and Ardie Greenamyer rounding out the field. Although the USF2000 series' top class is open only to Van Diemens, any car that meets the current SCCA Formula Continental rules is eligible to compete in the series' National class.

Serralles, who was an impressive second in the first practice session on Wednesday, brought out the other red flag during the qualifying session when he landed in a gravel trap off Turn 6. Like McKenna he was also able to drive his car back after it was unstuck.

Karam had an accident during the test day here on Tuesday when he went a little wide in Turn 3 and backed into the guardrail that surrounds the 2.54-mile, 12-turn road course.

"The Andretti Autosport team worked until about 11:30 that night to repair the car," Karam said. "We bounced back and it's been going great since then. We were first in both practice sessions on Wednesday and now we got the pole, and now we just hope to get the championship. I really have to thank my team for all their hard work."

Karam participated in the USF2000 test here earlier this year and he got his first Skip Barber National victory at Road Atlanta last year. "This track has been good to me," he noted.

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Ellery is making his American racing debut here this weekend. He said his first lap at Road Atlanta “scared me out of my mind,” but he said the wet session Thursday morning actually gave him an advantage.

“We just came out of winter in Australia, and it’s been raining for months there,” he said. “I had two races in the wet recently, and I think that helped me this morning. In the races I run we never have wet tires, so running on wet tires this morning was great. The Cooper tires are fantastic; they gave me more faith in the car in the wet than I’m used to.

Ellery said his qualifying run was not without its moments, however. “Mikhail [Goikhberg] went off in Turn 1 once and I just missed him by a foot,” Ellery said. “We very well could have had two JDC cars on the flatbed after that one. But then we both recovered.

“On my fast lap at the end I still got held up, so I think I could have gone faster,” Ellery added.

For more information on the USF2000 series, as well as live timing and scoring, see [USF2000.com](http://USF2000.com).

Mazda plans to offer live video streaming of the awards ceremony on Friday when the Star Mazda, USF2000 and Skip Barber National champions are honored. The Internet address is <http://www.justin.tv/a/mazdausa> and the coverage is slated to begin at 7:30 p.m. Eastern time.

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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](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).