



A TRIO OF GRADUATES CO-STARRING IN NASCAR'S BIGGEST WEEKEND SHOWS THE STAR MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP IS A GATEWAY TO MANY FORMS OF RACING

Daytona International Raceway (Feb. 13) – As these words are being written, Colin Braun, a 2002 graduate of the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear and now driving the #16 Con-way Freight Ford for Roush Fenway Racing, is running 13th in the Nationwide race taking place at Daytona. And watching from the sidelines are two more graduates, Michael McDowell (the 2004 Star Mazda champion) and Scott Speed, who will be lining up side-by-side on the 15th row tomorrow for the start of one of the biggest auto races in the world, the Daytona 500.



Wherever they ultimately finish today and tomorrow, these three drivers are proof that the Star Mazda Championship is not only a major step on the way up the ladder of open-wheel racing, but also a gateway to all forms of motorsports.

For example; two weeks ago at Daytona, no fewer than five past Star Mazda champions, as well as a number of other Star Mazda alumni, were in the field for yet another world-class race, the Rolex 24. And this May, when 33 of the best drivers in the world line up for the legendary Indy 500, there will be at least three Star Mazda graduates in the field, including Marco Andretti, Graham Rahal and 2005 series champion Raphael Matos.

Nor is this progression limited to young Star Mazda drivers; the 2009 Master Series (for drivers 45 and older) champion, 51 year-old Mike Guasch, will race in the European FIA GT series this season. And the Expert Series (drivers 30 to 44) champion, Chris Cumming, will compete in the Patron GT3 series. That's the way it goes with drivers who graduate with honors from one of the most competitive driver development series in auto racing today. But for the moment, since NASCAR and Daytona are center stage, let's focus on Colin Braun, Scott Speed and Michael McDowell.

Colin Braun, who began racing at the age of 6 in Quarter Midgets, competed in the Star Mazda Championship with Blueacre racing in 2004. At age 16, he moved up to make his GRAND-AM debut in the Rolex 24 Hours of Daytona. That same season he made history when he became the youngest driver of a Daytona Prototype at 17. Joining Krohn Racing in 2006, Colin won his first career Grand Am race at the Brumos Porsche 250 at Daytona, becoming the youngest driver in North America to win a major auto race at 17 years, 9 months, and 7 days old. At the

end of the season, SPEEDTV.com and Racer Magazine named Colin Rookie-of-the-Year for all of motorsports. He became the youngest driver to stand on the podium at the 24 Hours of Le Mans when he finished second in his class in a Ferrari F430 in 2007.

That same season he entered into a driver development contract with Roush Fenway Racing, making his ARCA RE/MAX Series, NASCAR Camping World Truck Series, and NASCAR Nationwide Series debuts. In 2008 and 2009 Colin competed full-time in the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series in the No. 6 Con-Way Freight Ford F-150 for Roush Fenway Racing, earning Raybestos Rookie-of-the-Year honors in 2008, and scoring his first win and five pole positions in 2009. He now drives the Roush Fenway Racing No. 16 Con-Way Freight Ford full-time in 2010 in the NASCAR Nationwide Series.

Scott Speed started his racing career when he was 10 years old. After winning numerous karting championships, he moved up to the Star Mazda Championship in 2002, winning his debut event at Sebring. He went on to score five top-5, five top-10s and finished 8th in the championship. By this point, he had caught the eye of the Red Bull Driver Search program and moved to Europe to drive British F3 in 2003. In 2004 he moved to the Formula Renault series and also tested with Red Bull Cheever IRL team. He raced the GP2 series in 2005 and made his debut as a Formula One driver at the 2006 Bahrain Grand Prix.

Speed drove for Red Bull Scuderia Toro Rosso in 2006 and 2007 before moving back to the U.S. in 2008 to compete, with Red Bull backing, in the ARCA series. He won in his 4th-ever ARCA start and also drove limited Craftsman Truck schedule, winning in his 6th start. He moved up to Sprint Cup in 2009 as driver of the #82 Red Bull Toyota and also ran partial Nationwide Series schedule with Michael Waltrip Racing Toyota. He is now in his second full year as a NASCAR Sprint Cup driver.

Michael McDowell became an instant classic on Youtube following his vicious wreck during Sprint Cup qualifying in April 2008 at Texas Motor Speedway. But on Thursday, the Phoenix native took a major step forward when he drove an unsponsored Toyota for Prism Motorsports to a 14th-place finish in the first Gatorade Duel at Daytona International Speedway to earn a berth in Sunday's Daytona 500.

His road to Daytona began with two seasons in the Star Mazda championship, earning 'Rookie of the Year' honors and second-place in the championship in 2003, followed by his championship season in 2004, including wins in seven of the series' ten races. In 2005, he co-drove the No. 19 Make-A-Wish Daytona Prototype with Champ Car veteran



Memo Gidley, winning the season-finale at Mexico City. He was also the first driver since Mario Andretti in 1975 to run both a major open-wheel race and a sports car race in the same weekend when he drove the Rocketsports entry in the Mexico City Champ Car race. He again raced in the Rolex Series in 2006, scoring one win, eleven top-10 finishes and finishing 4th in the championship.

McDowell made his stock car debut that year, running five races with Eddie Sharp Racing in the ARCA series. In 2007, he ran the full ARCA season in the #2 Eddie Sharp Racing Dodge, scoring four wins and nine poles to finish second in the series title hunt and claim the 'Rookie of the Year' Award. He graduated to the Sprint Cup Series in 2008, running 20 races with Michael Waltrip Racing and winning "Rookie of the Race" six times. In typical young NASCAR driver fashion, McDowell has bounced around between teams in both the Nationwide and Sprint Cup Series and is making a solid name for himself as one of NASCAR's rising stars. This will be his first start in the Daytona 500 and, by the most unlikely of coincidences, he and Scott Speed will start side-by-side on the 15th row.

"I'm not sure they know this, but Michael and Scott share more than having raced in the Star Mazda Championship," says series founder and President Gary Rodrigues. "They both actually raced the exact same car driving for my team, Star Race Cars. Obviously they both showed exceptional pace in the car. Outside the car, however, their personalities were poles apart. Scott was a combination of flamboyant and aloof. Michael was serious but personable. The trait they share that makes Star Mazda proud is that neither came to racing with family money, but earned their way in the business of motorsports, based on merit and perseverance. They are the kind of examples we like to use for the rising stars now competing in our series."

About the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear

For 2010, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear will feature an 11-weekend, 13-race schedule, most on major race weekends with American Le Mans and the Indy Racing League. Rising stars from around the world will compete for prizes valued at \$1.5 million and benefit from two driver development programs, including the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development Ladder and the Indy Racing League's 'Road to Indy' program. The Star Mazda Championship features standing starts, wheel-to-wheel racing at 150 mph and budgets a fraction of other top open-wheel ladder series. For more information, please visit www.starmazda.com or contact Peter Frey / Communications Director / 818-398-5733 / StarMazdaPR@aol.com.

