

## **MAZDA'S SALESMAN RACER IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT**

### **DANNY BENDER AND TEAMMATES RACE INTO VIRGINIA INTERNATIONAL RACEWAY THIS WEEKEND**

IRVINE, Calif. (August 22, 2016) – “Win on Sunday, Sell on Monday” is one of the most enduring cliches in auto racing. Yet, for Mazda racer Danny Bender, it’s literally true. Bender, who teams with co-driver Britt Casey Jr. in the No. 27 Freedom Autosport TRUMPF Mazda MX-5 in the Continental Tires SportsCar Challenge series, is also one of the leading Mazda sales reps in the country. This weekend at Virginia International Raceway (VIR), the 25-year-old Bender will be in action at the IMSA Oak Tree Grand Prix at VIR. The two-hour, 40-minute endurance race takes the green flag at 1:50 pm ET Saturday, and can be streamed live via IMSA.tv.

“I was racing Mazdas before I sold them,” said Bender, a native of Chicago. “It was Spec Miata and a few MX-5 Cup races and then I started selling Mazdas in August, 2013. I won the 2014 SCCA T4 National Championship at Mazda Raceway in an older [MX-5] Cup car. By then, the whole ‘racing salesman’ thing really took hold.”

This is his first season on a professional racing level, but, on the sales floor at Autobarn Mazda in Evanston, Ill., Bender is no rookie. He’s known as the guy who can recite nearly every detail about each new Mazda.

“If I’m going to do something, I like to be good at it,” Bender said. “Part of being a good salesman is knowing everything about your product. The connection between being the racer guy and the guy who knows all about the street cars became a part of my sales pitch. Passion sells – and that’s the number one thing that helps. I have a lot of natural passion – especially when it comes to Mazda.”

Bender has learned an immense amount from his five teammates at Freedom Autosport.

“I’ve learned a lot, and the teammates I have are among the best MX-5 drivers in the world,” Bender said. “Andrew Carbonell may be the best MX-5 driver in the world. What he does with that car is unbelievable. And Stevan [McAleer] and Chad [McCumbee] are the defending series champions [in the No. 25 ModSpace/Premier Building Systems/Spartan Cargo Trailers MX-5], so they’re phenomenal about their craft. And then Liam [Dwyer, who shares the No. 26 Semper Fi Fund MX-5 with Carbonell] and my teammate Britt have so much experience in these cars. I have learned so much about endurance racing from them.

“I love – love – the track at VIR,” Bender said. “On lap times, we should be good. There are a few long straights where we’ll have to just hold on, but from Turn 1 through the esses and all the way to Turn 11 is where we’ll be really good. It’s about momentum and handling. Going up the esses, you can really feel the car on the limit, but you have a lot of trust in the car because it’s an MX-5.”

McCumbee and McAleer are coming off of a fourth-place finish in the most recent Continental Tire series race at Road America, solidifying second position in the team and driver standings. Dwyer and Carbonell teamed for fifth, while Bender and Casey Jr. finished ninth. It marked the second time this year that all three Freedom Autosport entries finished in the Top-10.

Battery Tender Global Mazda MX-5 Cup presented by BFGoodrich Tires

Rounds nine and 10 for the Global Mazda MX-5 Cup will take place at VIR this weekend as nearly 40 identically prepared Mazda MX-5s do battle in two 45-minute races. Look for all of the series details in a Mazda Motorsports news release this week.

### **Mazda Motorsports**

Mazda Motorsports boasts the most comprehensive auto racing development ladder system of any auto manufacturer in the world. The Mazda Road to 24 (#MRT24) program offers a number of scholarships to advance drivers up the sports car racing ladder, beginning with the Global MX-5 Cup series and culminating with the Mazda Prototype team. The Mazda Road to Indy (#MRTI) is a similar program that includes Mazda-powered categories of USF2000, Pro Mazda and Indy Lights. In grassroots road racing, more Mazdas race on any given

weekend in North America than any other manufacturer. Mazda is also the title sponsor of the renowned Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in Monterey, Calif. Follow all of the latest news at [MazdaMotorsports.com](http://MazdaMotorsports.com), @MazdaRacing on Twitter, and MazdaMotorsports on Instagram and Facebook.

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