

# INAUGURAL MAZDA MX-5 CUP GLOBAL INVITATIONAL PREVIEW

## MAZDA RACEWAY HOSTS INTERNATIONAL RACERS ON ALL-MAZDA WEEKEND

IRVINE, Calif. (September 8, 2016) – The MX-5 Cup race cars are the same ones that raced at Mazda Raceway just five months ago, but there are many new faces behind the wheel. This Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, as a part of the Mazda Road to Indy season finale weekend, the inaugural MX-5 Cup Global Invitational will take place. Ten American Mazda racers will be going head-to-head with five European racers, and two each from Japan and Australia, all in identically prepared Mazda MX-5 Cup race cars.

John Doonan, director of motorsports, Mazda North American Operations, said, “This weekend reflects over two years of planning. It will pave the way for our program to grow internationally in 2017 and beyond. When we launched the new car and series, we included the word ‘Global’ for a reason. Mazda affiliates and racers from abroad have wanted to get involved in what had previously been North American exclusive. We’re thrilled to have our overseas friends join us at our home track for what we hope will be the first of many such events in the years to come. With all cars being as identical as possible, it’s a perfect showcase for racers to prove that no matter if you are on the highway, or on the track, driving matters.”

### Live Stream Schedule:

Both races will be lived streamed on [www.MazdaLIVE.com](http://www.MazdaLIVE.com)

10:30 p.m. (Pacific) Saturday, September 10, 2016 – Race #1

10:00 a.m. (Pacific) Sunday, September 11, 2016 – Race #2

### The Competitors:

Oliver Allwood – England  
Erik Blixit – Sweden  
Anthony Crawford – Australia  
John Dean II – USA  
Mark Drennan – USA  
Robby Foley – USA  
Kamil Franczak – Poland  
Gabriele Gardel – Switzerland  
Enami Kitahira – Japan  
Moritz Kranz – Germany  
Ara Malkhassian – USA  
Glenn McGee – USA  
Sarah Montgomery – USA  
Tim Probert – USA  
Mike Sinclair – Australia  
Nathanial Sparks – USA  
Chris Stone – USA  
Aurora Straus – USA  
Yuui Tsutsumi – Japan

### The format:

Two 45-minute races will be run. The racer scoring the most points between the two races will be crowned the champion.

### The Prize:

The winner of the Invitational will be sent to Mazda Motorsports partner Multimatic to train on the “Driver in the Loop” (DIL) simulator. Upon a successful simulation performance, he or she could advance to a one-day test in the Mazda Prototype that competes in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship series.

### Weekend story notes:

Over 100 MX-5 Cup race cars have been built and delivered in under one year. The 100th car was recently delivered to the Monticello Motor Club.

John Dean II will be seeking to make up for two near wins at Mazda Raceway at the season opening Battery Tender Mazda MX-5 Cup weekend.

Four of the 19 racers are women, two each from the U.S.A., and Japan.

Nathanial Sparks is currently leading the Battery Tender Global Mazda MX-5 Cup presented by BFGoodrich Tires championship and the chase for the \$200,000 Mazda Road to 24 Scholarship.

Aurora Straus will be performing double-duty this weekend. In addition to racing, she will be singing the national anthem prior to the afternoon races each day.

Mark Drennan is the lone Californian in the field, and considered a local expert for the track.

This will be the first ever visit to Mazda Raceway for the international racers. Many of them trained on iRacing to learn the track.

#### Track Location:

Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca  
1021 Monterey-Salinas Highway  
Salinas, CA 93908

<http://www.mazdaraceway.com/mazda-road-indy>

#### Weekend MX-5 Cup Schedule Highlights:

Friday, September 9, 2016

9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Practice #1
1:25 p.m. – 1:55 p.m.	Practice #2
3:40 p.m. – 4:10 p.m.	Qualifying

Saturday, September 10, 2016

10:50 a.m. – 11:35 a.m.	Race #1 (45 minutes)
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Sunday, September 11, 2016

10:20 a.m. – 11:05 a.m.	Race #2 (45 minutes)
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#### MX-5 Cup Records at Mazda Raceway:

Fastest Qualifying Lap: 1:40.270 (80.351 mph) – John Dean II, 2016

Fastest Race Lap: 1:41.082 (80.048 mph) – Ara Malkhassian, 2016

Additional series information and complete results can be found on [www.MX-5Cup.com](http://www.MX-5Cup.com)

#### About MX-5 Cup

The MX-5 Cup race cars start as complete MX-5 road cars from the Mazda Hiroshima, Japan factory before being transported to engineering development partner Long Road Racing in Statesville, North Carolina where they are produced into a race car. The process includes disassembly of the production car, welding and paint of a full roll cage and interior, and assembly of the race car, adding more than 250 motorsports-specific parts. Other components of the car, including the Mazda SKYACTIV 2.0 liter engine are sealed to ensure even competition and a cost-effective platform.

The Battery Tender Global Mazda MX-5 Cup presented by BFGoodrich Tires is the signature spec series for the Mazda Road to 24 (#MRT24), the sports car counterpart to the Mazda Road to Indy (#MRTI). On both paths, Mazda-powered champions earn a Mazda scholarship to advance their career. The MX-5 Cup champion earns a \$200,000 scholarship.

Information on the car is online at [www.mazdamotorsports.com](http://www.mazdamotorsports.com).

#### About 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 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 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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Additional assets available online:

**PHOTOS** [\(1\)](#)

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