MATT CRESCI WINS 2016 MAZDA ROAD TO 24 SHOOTOUT

CALIFORNIA RACER SCORES $100,000 SCHOLARSHIP FOR 2017 BATTERY TENDER MAZDA MX-5 CUP

IRVINE, Calif. (November 18, 2016) – After two days of intense competition at NOLA Motorsports Park in Avondale, Louisiana, Matt Cresci from Los Gatos, California won the 2016 Mazda Road to 24 Shootout. The $100,000 scholarship that came with the victory is the largest prize in grassroots motorsports. Launched in 2006, the Mazda Road to 24 Shootout has promoted ten talented grassroots racers into the professional ranks.

By winning the shootout, Cresci has earned the resources to compete in the 2017 Battery Tender Global Mazda MX-5 Cup presented by BFGoodrich Tires. The 2017 MX-5 Cup season will begin the weekend of April 20-23 at the Barber Motorsports Park, near Birmingham, Alabama, during the Verizon IndyCar weekend.

Cresci earned his way into the shootout by being among the fastest Miata racers in the country, having competed in the Teen Mazda Challenge and NASA Spec Miata. Cresci is a recent graduate of Santa Clara University with a business degree.

The Quotes:

Matt Cresci: “It is an indescribable feeling to achieve a goal that I have had for over fifteen years, it really is a dream come true. I look forward to my role as a Mazda Scholarship driver, and can’t thank Mazda enough for the opportunity to prove myself among such an outstanding field of competitors. Onwards and upwards!”

John Doonan, director of motorsports, Mazda North American Operations: “For our 11th annual shootout, we raised the bar again with an intense competition among eight great racers. The NOLA facility was perfect for our testing as it made for a level field, since none of the eight had raced there. This has become a signature event for Mazda and demonstrates our long-term commitment to supporting grassroots motorsports.”

Scott Goodyear, judge: “My first time as a judge for the Mazda Road to 24 Shootout was an eye-opening experience. All eight competitors were very strong and have the raw talent to succeed. It was a very tough process to select just one, and a thrill to be a part of the next generation of Mazda road-racers.”

The cars: Long Road Racing, the builders of the Mazda MX-5 Cup race car, prepared four 2016 Mazda Global MX-5 Cup racecars for the finalists to drive. BFGoodrich Tires provided their g-Force tires for the competition.

The criteria: Given that each of the finalists had proven themselves on the track with race wins and championships, the criteria to move up needed to be more encompassing. To succeed on the professional level requires a balance of both on-track and off-track skills including the following:

Driving ability – Fast laps/consistent laps
Technical skills – Understanding of vehicle dynamics and suspension, ability to evaluate vehicle handling, and ability to analyze data
The business of motorsports – Business proposal and presentation

The judges: The judges brought a wealth of both on-track and off-track expertise. The panel consisted of:

Peter Calhoun – Motorsport Marketing Manager, BFGoodrich Tires. Among his duties, Calhoun oversees the longtime Mazda/BFG partnership.
Andrew Carbonell – One of the leading Mazda racers competing in the Continental Tire SportsCar Challenge. Carbonell was also one of the lead test drivers in the development of the new MX-5 Cup race car.
Robby Foley – A 2015 Mazda Road to 24 Scholarship winner, Foley scored two wins in the 2016 MX-5 Cup season.
Scott Goodyear – The retired IndyCar race winner and current ESPN/ABC TV IndyCar and Indy 500 on-air analyst also competed as a factory sports car racer for Porsche (Le Mans 24 Hours), Jaguar (Rolex 24 at Daytona) and Audi.
Spencer Pigot – The 2015 Indy Lights powered by Mazda champion competed in his first Indy 500 in 2016. Spencer has earned multiple Mazda Road to Indy scholarships, and also joins the factory driver line-up in the Mazda Prototype in the long-distance endurance races.

Marcus Shen – The engineering director for the Mazda factory IMSA Prototype program. Shen is a Formula SAE alum from the University of Florida.

The Runner-ups for the 2016 Mazda Road to 24 Shootout were a strong group of racers from the SCCA, NASA, and iRacing.

Michael Carter, Savannah, Georgia – At-Large Nominee – SCCA Spec Miata
Julian Garfield, Mount Airy, Maryland – At-Large Nominee – SCCA SOLO
Justin Hille, Ypsilanti, Michigan – SCCA Runoffs Spec Miata Champion
Tyler Kicera, Mount Gretna, Pennsylvania – NASA East Spec Miata Champion
Daniel Langon, Alamo, California – Teen Mazda Challenge Western Region Champion
Matthew Machiko, Wexford, Pennsylvania – SCCA Runoffs Formula Mazda Champion
Pablo Lopez Padin, A Coruña, Spain – iRacing Global Mazda MX-5 Combine Cup Champion

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, @MazdaRacing on Twitter, and MazdaMotorsports on Instagram and Facebook.

# # #

Contact:
Dean Case, Mazda Motorsports (310) 318-4582, mazdaspeed@MazdaUSA.com
Jade Gurss, Mazda Motorsports (317) 517-4121, MazdaMotorsports@icloud.com

---

Additional assets available online:
PHOTOS (1)

https://news.mazdausa.com/2016-11-18-Matt-Cresci-Wins-2016-Mazda-Road-to-24-Shootout