



For Immediate Release

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A Best-Ever Finish for the Mazda Prototype Team

- The Soul Red No. 55 Mazda Grabs Third-Place Overall at Long Beach -

LONG BEACH, Calif. (April 8, 2017) – In the shadows of the Mazda North America Operations headquarters (well... 30 miles from the shadows), the No. 55 Soul Red Mazda Prototype team earned a best-ever finish in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship with a third-place tally at the 100-minute BUBBA burger Sports Car Grand Prix at Long Beach. The No. 70 Mazda also had a great day until pit stop troubles sent them one-lap behind the leaders, but rallied to finish sixth in the Prototype class. This is the second podium finish for the team (the previous was at Detroit in 2016, where the team finished third in-class, but had a lower overall finish). This is the first podium for the new Mazda RT24-P race car, which was sculpted by Mazda designers in Irvine, California.

The start of the race was sparkling for both Tristan Nunez in the No. 55, who muscled past the No. 5 Cadillac going into the first turn to take second place, and for Tom Long, who raced from his seventh place starting spot all the way to third place during his stint. With one hour remaining and Mazdas running second and third, both drivers encountered a gridlock situation exiting Turn 11, the tightest hairpin turn of the season. A Ford GT had stalled and was sitting sideways on the track. As Nunez steered around the car, the Ford lurched forward, forcing Nunez to come to a halt. Meanwhile, Long took a tighter angle to the inside of the stalled car. Then, the Ford suddenly backed up, forcing Long to a halt, eventually losing a number of positions in the traffic jam.

The short sprint race meant a single pit stop for both cars. Nunez handed the car over to co-driver Jonathan Bomarito, who returned to the track in fourth place among Prototypes, but behind a number of GT car who were on a different fuel strategy. Long also climbed out, as co-driver Joel Miller climbed in for the finish in the No. 70. The team suffered a failure with the air jack system, which meant the right rear tire was not properly attached. After correcting the issue, Miller was able to continue, but one lap down.



Tristan Nunez, Driver, No. 55 Mazda Prototype

About going three-wide with two Cadillacs at the start: “We got a great start, which put me side-by-side with them heading towards Turn 1. I didn't give an inch, so we made our way into second place. Then, we held it until the pit stop. I was very very pleased with the performance. At Long Beach, you're always going to have close calls, especially with so many cars on a short street circuit. It's a concrete canyon but, overall it was pretty clean despite all of the yellow flags that came out. It was pretty smooth sailing.”

Jonathan Bomarito, Driver, No. 55 Mazda Prototype

About fighting to pass the slower GT cars: “The traffic was wild! We talked about that scenario with Zach LaGrone, our engineer. You try to plan for it before the race, but you can't plan everything. You have to be flexible with the environment as you race. There were a lot of yellow flags, so you really had to stay clean. It's risk versus reward. You don't want to lose to the cars in front of you, but you can't take a big chance. Some took chances today and you saw their cars in the wall. It was a good day for the team and Mazda. And, a first podium for the new Mazda RT24-P! Tristan did great in qualifying and had a great first stint. I'm happy with our performance for the day.”

Tom Long, Driver, No. 70 Castrol Edge/ModSpace Mazda Prototype

“It was a lot of fun here at Long Beach, and our Mazda was really strong today. The traffic was like driving on the 405! Our car had such strong braking going into the corners, we were able to out-brake and then pounce on the Nissan and some of the other cars ahead of us. It was about being aggressive but being smart at the same time while using that to our advantage. It was a dynamic race. The hairpin always seems to have some excitement and it happened multiple times this race. We had a traffic jam there. I don't expect to be using reverse during race, but it happens!”

Joel Miller, Driver, No. 70 CAstrol Edge/ModSpace Mazda Prototype

“The biggest thing for us in this sprint race format was losing the lap because of the issue there in the pits. That was crushing to our race. We rebounded from that and showed that we had a car that was quick, as our pace was very good through the entire race. It was definitely bumper cars out there, but we knew that coming into the race. It's fantastic for the 55 car, and I'm really proud for the



program for them to get that podium. We know what we need to work on going towards COTA [Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Tex., May 6], which is next. We showed the cars are getting faster on the race track, which is good and shows we have the potential for many more podium positions.”

John Doonan, Director of Mazda Motorsports

“It was a decent Mazda day here in Long Beach. Both cars showed solid pace throughout the race....and if you are going to stand somewhere at the end of the race, you certainly want it to be on the podium. I want to thank every one of the team members and all of our partners for their efforts and support. It has been a thrash getting up to speed and getting the 2017 program off the ground. Now, getting a taste of what it feels like to have the leaders in our sights is nice, but we are far from satisfied. The top step of the podium is where the Mazda brand and our partners like Castrol, ModSpace and Motegi belong.”

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

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Photo Cutlines:

- 1.) Going into Turn 1, Tristan Nunez (No. 55) slices into second place while Tom Long (Machine Gray car) begins his charge from seventh place.
- 2.) Mazda drivers Jonathan Bomarito and Tristan Nunez enjoy the spoils of a third-place finish at the Grand Prix of Long Beach.
- 3.) (L to R) Tristan Nunez, Mazda’s John Doonan and Jonathan Bomarito celebrate the first podium finish of the season.

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