



For Immediate Release

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More than \$2 Million in Mazda Scholarships on the Line

- The Mazda Road to Indy Will Crown Three Champions This Week at Watkins Glen -

IRVINE, Calif. (August 28, 2017) – More than \$2 million in Mazda driver development scholarships will be earned this weekend at the season finale for the 2017 Mazda Road to Indy season. Four races for the three Mazda-powered categories take place this Saturday and Sunday at the Watkins Glen International road course. (The Battery Tender Mazda Global MX-5 Cup presented by BFGoodrich Tires series will also compete in two races this Saturday at the Glen. The MX-5 Cup season continues later in the year.)

Championship-winning drivers in the USF2000, Pro Mazda and Indy Lights series will each earn a Mazda scholarship, allowing them to climb up a rung on the open-wheel racing ladder in 2018. Sometimes winning the scholarship can be the difference between continuing or ending a driving career, so the passion and tension is palpable among all of the contenders as they aim to follow in the footsteps of those who have used the MRTI to further their career. (In 2017, 25 of the 33 starting drivers in the Indianapolis 500 had MRTI racing experience!)

Indy Lights presented by Cooper Tires

Kyle Kaiser, 21, from Santa Clara, California, needs only to start the Indy Lights race (Sunday, 10:50 a.m. ET) to secure the championship in his third season in the series. Driving for Juncos Racing, Kaiser has three victories and has extended his points lead with a string of consistent finishes. He will earn a scholarship with a \$1 million value, guaranteeing him at least three starts in next year's Verizon IndyCar Series, including the 102nd Indianapolis 500. The Juncos team last won the Lights title in 2015 with driver Spencer Pigot.



“It's a huge relief heading into the finale knowing I just have to take the green flag to officially secure the Indy Lights Championship,” said Kaiser. “My mindset going into the Glen will be to enjoy the race weekend and go for the win with nothing to lose. I'll have a blast going out there and driving hard for a win in the finale at such a great circuit. Knowing that I'll have the 3 races in IndyCar for 2018 is a huge motivator heading into next season, I'll be working extremely hard this offseason to prepare so that I'll be competitive and show everyone what I'm capable of at the top level.”

Pro Mazda presented by Cooper Tires

The closest-fought series all season has been Pro Mazda, as 21-year-old Brazilian Victor Franzoni has been locked in a titanic battle with Australia's Anthony Martin, 22, last year's USF2000 series champion. Franzoni won the most recent race at Gateway Motorsports Park to take a two-point lead into the two races on the calendar at Watkins Glen. Both drivers have five wins this year, and the duo have finished 1-2 in nine of the first 10 races. Both are aiming at the Mazda scholarship of more than \$790,000 (out of an overall fund of \$1.1 million) toward a season in the Indy Lights class in a Soul Red race car.

“I'm really excited for the final races,” said Franzoni, who drives for Juncos Racing. “This has been the best year of my career and I'm driving better, for sure. I think I grew up a lot this season. For the final, that's two more races that I have to do my job, do my best and try to win both. It won't be easy, but I'm ready. Juncos Racing is ready, so it'll be fun and the most important moment of my life.”

Martin is trying to win a second consecutive Mazda scholarship with Cape Motorsports, as he topped his teammate in a dramatic USF2000 battle in 2016.

“Last year's title fight has helped me this year,” said Martin. “Just knowing what is needed at the end of the season when it's crunch time. You really have to work harder than ever with your team to get the most out of your car and yourself. It is super important because every point is crucial and can determine whether you win the championship.”

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Cooper Tires USF2000 powered by Mazda

It's been quite a year for Oliver Askew. The 20-year-old native of Jupiter, Fla. was a karting champion when he won the Team U.S.A. Scholarship to race in England last fall. After an impressive run there, he returned to the U.S. for the Mazda Road To Indy Shootout, where he topped young champions from around the globe to win the \$200,000 Mazda scholarship for this year's USF2000 series. Despite a dearth of open-wheel experience, he earned five straight wins in his Soul Red car with Cape Motorsports early in the year.

"I have been working harder than I ever have to secure this championship," said Askew. "I think the same can be said about Cape Motorsports and everyone around me that has helped get to this point. We all want this, and if we keep doing what we have been every race so far, there is no reason why it can't happen. We've been the most dominant force this year and I'm confident we can have a successful end. I've been in this situation countless times in my career, and what is on the line is very similar to what I went through last year at the MRTI Shootout at Mazda Raceway. The mindset that I've developed through this year will be the same in the final race at Watkins Glen, I will be focusing on the elements within my control, and will maximize the opportunity given to me."

Going into the finale, Askew has seven wins, but he holds only a 13-point lead over Rinus VeeKay, the impressive 16-year-old rookie from the Netherlands. VeeKay, (whose full name is Rinus van Kalmthout) announced at last year's Indianapolis 500 that he was joining the Mazda Road to Indy, and has turned in a nearly error-free rookie year for Pabst Racing with two wins and 11 podium finishes in 13 races.

"I am very excited to be one of the two USF2000 championship contenders in my rookie season [in a race car]," said VeeKay. "I trained hard for Watkins Glen and I am ready to go."

Askew and VeeKay will battle for the nearly \$400,000 scholarship and a seat next year in the Pro Mazda series in a single USF2000 race Saturday afternoon at 1:30 pm ET.

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The Mazda \$200,000 Road to Indy Shootout is slated for December of this year to determine the USF2000 scholarship driver for 2018. It brings approximately 20 champions from open-wheel series on five continents to choose a winner.

Watch all of the races with the Road to Indy app, or online at the official site of each series or RoadtoIndy.tv.

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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