DEAN GOES FLAG-TO-FLAG AT ROAD AMERICA FOR BATTERY TENDER MAZDA MX-5 CUP WIN

ELKHART LAKE, Wis. (June 22, 2018) – While the field jockeyed for every inch of racetrack behind him, polesitter John Dean II went flag-to-flag in Friday's Battery Tender Global Mazda MX-5 Cup presented by BFGoodrich race at Road America. Global Mazda MX-5 Cup championship leader Nikko Reger finished just 0.5074-seconds behind to claim runner up in the first race of the weekend as Mazda Road to 24 Shootout winner Selin Rollan came home in third.

With a reputation for close finishes and epic drafting battles, Road America was not a race where Dean expected to lead all 15 laps in the 45-minute race. Despite never yielding the point, Dean's race was anything but uneventful.

"That race was definitely not boring from my perspective!" Dean said. "When you are leading like that, you are looking in the mirror to figure out where you need to go, and where everyone is going, to share the draft with a teammate and avoid being overtaken because you don't want the train to go by you."

A clean start, a well-executed restart and a healthy set of BFGoodrich tires on his No. 16 Sick Sideways Global MX-5 Cup car helped Dean keep his challengers at bay and in a battle for the final podium spots behind him.

"My car was absolutely brilliant," said Dean. "My teammate Nathaniel Sparks put it on the scales last night and just made sure it was set up the way it needed to be, and the car was the best it's ever been. I was hitting my marks and trying not to overdrive the car right at the end. When Selin [Rollan] and Nikko [Reger] started to battle, I was able to get a little bit of a gap and I just tried to put the hammer down and give it everything I had. Having a left rear tire that was in good shape at the end gives you a good run through the Carousel because you can get in there a little bit hotter without the car going sideways. When I was out there, I knew I had a good enough gap that I could win without having to run defensive if I just hit my marks."

Current championship leader Reger finished second in the No. 01 Slipstream Performance entry and spent most of his race locked in a fight with Rollan. He wasn't able to shake Rollan until the final lap, but by then Dean had already checked out from the pack.

Rollan, who won at the Circuit of the Americas in challenging conditions, had a great start from fifth on the grid, which eventually set him up to claim the final podium spot in the No. 87 Sick Sideways car. Rollan was also the highest finishing rookie in the field, getting him one step closer to that $75,000 end of the year prize for Rookie of the Year.

Finishing fourth in the No. 20 Slipstream Performance car, Hernan Palermo was in the mix for a podium finish as well and ended up the highest-finishing Master Class driver.

"I wanted to finish on the podium – that was the goal," Palermo said. "It didn't happen, but it was still a great race. It was stressful as always, but that's what makes it entertaining. The reality is everyone is aware of their surroundings 99 percent of the time and incidents happen sometimes, but it's a lot of friendly racing. The big takeaway for me from today's race is that it's probably wise to make moves early in the race, compared to waiting to make a move. We'll see what happens tomorrow."

The Battery Tender Hard Charger, Todd Lamb, was knocking on the door of a podium finish all race long in his No. 84 Atlanta Speedwerks MX-5, but eventually settled for a fifth; an impressive feat after starting 11th on the grid. The six positions gained during the race earned Lamb and his crew chief $1000 and a Battery Tender charger, each.

"It was just like being in a traffic jam the whole race and coming from 11th, it was pretty hairy there the first couple of laps to get by some of the guys who also wanted to get to the front," Lamb said. "At that point, it was a lot of strategy – trying to play offense and defense at the same time to keep moving up. I capitalized on a few mistakes by other drivers, and that was the key, I think. We definitely made the car better from qualifying. I think that's what helped us move up. I'm really proud of the Atlanta Speedwerks crew, and thanks to Mazda and Battery Tender."

Alex Wolenski, driver of the No. 56 McCumbee McAleer Racing MX-5 earned his first Challenger Cup presented by Monticello Motor Club victory of the season after improving five positions from his grid spot to claim 17th overall.

"The Challenger Cup presented by Monticello Motor Club is awesome," Wolenski said. "It's a great way for a gentleman driver

like me to make his debut in professional racing. I'm honored to be on track with all this talent and I'm having so much fun."

With a pole position leading to a big victory, it was nearly a perfect day for John Dean, who had only one regret after taking the checkered flag.

"The embarrassing thing was I forgot to go to the podium and everyone followed me into the paddock!"

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