DEAN SWEEPS BATTERY TENDER GLOBAL MAZDA MX-5 CUP AT ROAD AMERICA

ELKHART LAKE, Wis. (June 23, 2018) – John Dean II swept The Battery Tender Global Mazda MX-5 Cup presented by BFGoodrich weekend at Road America with a second victory on Saturday, but his path to victory on Saturday was much more crowded than it was the day before.

Dean earned a flag-to-flag victory in Friday's Round Five race, but the MX-5 Cup competition wasn't about to let him do the same thing in Saturday's Round Six. Though he started from pole in the No. 16 Sick Sideways Global Mazda MX-5 Cup entry and held his lead in the opening laps, it wasn't long until he fell victim to the massive drafting potential presented by Road America's 4.014 miles.

"That was a tough battle," Dean said. "I tried to do the same thing I did yesterday and run the same lines and same defensive technique, but obviously the other guys weren't having it! It was good though and it made for a fun race."

Global Mazda MX-5 Cup continued to demonstrate incredible competition, with 305 passes for position in the 40-minute race, including six official lead changes. The top 10 were nose-to-tail all race long and nobody was able to break away from the pack, Dean included.

"For a minute there, those guys got by and I was trying to size them up and figure out where I'm going to make a move and how to get by," Dean said. "I was a little confused on what to do; it's really difficult here with the big drafts and cars in a line. We've raced here a lot over the years and we've always been fast and our setup has worked well, but I've had a ton of bad luck here over the years. This year, finally the karma gods smiled on me."

That smile came with eight minutes left in the race, when a full-course caution was issued for a car stuck in the gravel at Turn 14. Dean found himself in the lead behind the safety car, with teammate Nathaniel Sparks behind him.

"Sparky disappeared and I don't know where he went, but it must have been one heck of a battle to get back to the front," Dean said. "When I saw him behind me for the restart, I felt pretty confident that we could hold the positions. We've raced a lot here together. I know what he's going to do and he knows what I'm going to do, because we've been teammates for so long."

When the green flag came back out, the white flag was waved with it to single one lap to go. The Sick Sideways teammates worked together to hold off the rest of the field and crossed the finish line with Dean out front and Sparks in second.

It was an impressive comeback for Sparks in the No. 8 Sick Sideways car, who started second, but tumbled down the order in the opening lap. He spent nearly every lap thereafter door-to-door with another car, clawing his way back to second.

Finishing a hard-fought third was Robert Stout in the No. 28 McCumbee McAleer Racing machine. His teammate, Joey Bickers, led briefly in the No. 34 McCumbee McAleer car, but just missed the podium, finishing fourth.

The highest finishing Masters Class entrant was Todd Lamb in the No. 84 Atlanta Speedwerks MX-5. Lamb was in the fray for a win for much of the race and even led a lap, but ultimately crossed the line in fifth ahead of Friday's Masters Class winner Hernan Palermo(m) in eighth overall.

"We had a much better car today," Lamb said. "The Atlanta Speedwerks crew worked really hard on it and we got to the front and led some laps, which is key. It was just a game of chess out there – I got to the front, got shuffled back a little bit, and got to the front again and it was just a matter of timing. Unfortunately for me, I got too big of a gap coming out of Turn 14 and the pack went by. I had to come back and pick off a few guys. I got up to fifth and I'm pretty happy with that but it would have been nice to be on the podium."

Improving a remarkable 10 positions in the race, Keith Jensen earned the Battery Tender Hard Charger of the Race award. He finished 13th after starting 23rd and collected $1,000 and a Battery Tender charger for both himself and his crew chief.

"The Global MX-5 Cup has great drivers and Road America is a beautiful track," Jensen summarized. "For me it's fun to be a part of it the series, and to win the Hard Charger makes it a fantastic day."

The Challenger Class also saw a repeat winner, with Alex Wolenski taking another victory at Road America. The driver of the No. 56 McCumbee McAleer Racing car finished 19th overall after starting from the back of the field.

“I couldn’t be more happy,” Wolenski said. “Qualifying was a little dicey with our mechanical issue. I missed Charlie [Belluardo]. I think if he were here this weekend we would have been battling. The Challenger Class presented by Monticello Motor Club is such a great opportunity for a gentleman driver like me to hang out with these pro racers and the pro racing scene.”

Robert Noaker, the youngest driver in the series at 14 years-old, was the highest finishing rookie. His No. 13 Sick Sideways crossed the line in 10th, earning him valuable points toward the $75,000 prize for Rookie of the Year. He trails Selin Rollan in that contest, but Rollan exited Round Six early.

Nikko Reger, who finished runner-up in Friday’s race continues to lead the Championship points ahead of Bryan Ortiz. Dean moves up to third with his Road America sweep.

Next on the schedule for the Battery Tender Global Mazda MX-5 Cup is Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, July 27 – 29. Rounds Seven and Eight will be streamed live on the Mazda USA YouTube page where you can also find replays of this weekend’s doubleheader at Road America.

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