



For Immediate Release

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

## **Mazda Prototype Drivers Want to Add to Special Sebring Memories**

*- Two-car Mazda Prototype Team Aim for Overall Victory at 12 Hours of Sebring -*

IRVINE, Calif. (March 13, 2017) – Mazda has a long and successful record at Sebring Raceway, earning 13 class victories in the arduous Mobil 1 12 Hours of Sebring. But, at this year's 65th annual running of the endurance classic, the Mazda Prototype team has an opportunity to make history by gunning for the first overall victory for the brand. The new Mazda RT24-P race cars, with the inline, four-cylinder turbocharged two-liter MZ2.0-T engine, features the Mazda KODO design language under the Daytona Prototype international (DPi) rules in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. The 12 Hours of Sebring takes the green flag this Saturday at 10:40 A.M. Eastern Time. The final 10 hours of the race can be seen on the FS1 network, while the entire race is heard on the IMSA Radio Network.

Each of the six Mazda Prototype drivers hope to add another prominent highlight to their driving history this weekend. We asked each to share a special memory from Sebring Raceway, so sit back as they share their most memorable moments at the bumpy 3.47-mile circuit.

### **No. 70 Castrol Edge / ModSpace Mazda Prototype Drivers**

**Tom Long** *hearkened back to an unlikely triumph in a Mazda Miata early in his grassroots racing career.*

“My favorite Sebring memory would have to be the time we showed up for a six-hour endurance club race with a field of more than 50 cars, ranging from ground-pounding GT cars to lightweight ‘momentum’ cars. Our team was running a Spec Miata, and our outright pace wasn't quite the same as most. But as the hours wound into the night, through fuel mileage and attrition, we ended up with not only the win in our class, but the overall victory! Who would have thought that? We were shocked, but quite pleased none the less!”



**Joel Miller** *recalled a Sebring moment when he raced in the open-wheel Mazda Road to Indy.*

“My best memory has to be when I won the opening round of the Pro Mazda Championship [then known as the Star Mazda championship] in 2008. I qualified on the pole and won the race driving for JDC Motorsports with engineer Rick Cameron. (Rick is the engineer over at the Spirit of Daytona Prototype No. 90 car now, and we are still good friends.) This was my first race driving in the MAZDASPEED Driver Development Program [now known as the Mazda Road to Indy], and I was part of the first year of scholarship drivers. The race had a standing start where I fell to second but took the lead back into Turn 3 and never looked back! Later that weekend, I watched the start of the 12 Hours from a spot outside of Turn 1 and told myself that someday I would win the big race. I have many memories of Sebring and really enjoy the place.”

**Marino Franchitti** *has a superb record of success at Sebring, but two victories stand out more than the others.*

“My best memory at Sebring? That’s a tough one! The wins in 2013 and ’14 certainly stick out, but for different reasons. My son was born while I was at the race in ’13, so to win it for him was something very special. Rolex gave the winners watches that year, so when he’s older, I can’t wait for him to have that. Winning overall in 2014 was just incredible. We didn’t have the raw pace to do it, so to make it happen was so satisfying as a team. The focus on the overall winners is massive, so it was a much more intense experience in the days that followed and to return to the track over a year later and see the winner’s banner on the pit building was something that gives me a lot of pride.”

## **No. 55 Mazda Prototype Drivers**

**Tristan Nunez** *remembers his first professional race, which took place at Sebring.*

“My favorite memory was making the podium in my first American Le Mans Series (ALMS) race in the Prototype Challenge (PC) class with Performance Tech Motorsports. It was my first-ever pro race, and I was not expecting to do as well as we did to be honest. We just had a great race and finished third. Sebring has always been a favorite of mine. It's still a track that intimidates the hell out of me, but it’s a place I always look forward to driving.”



**Jonathan Bomarito** chose a memory that provided a glimpse of his future in Mazda sports cars when he was an up-and-coming driver in an open-wheel series that is now a part of the Mazda Road to Indy. (Bomarito won the USF2000 National Championship that year with five victories.)

“My best Sebring memory would have to be from 2003. It was the first race of the year in the USF2000 series, and my first time at the 12 Hour weekend. Being a part of the event, and seeing the ‘big cars’ up close was humbling and exciting all at once.”

**Spencer Pigot** recalled a moment where he earned his first Mazda driver development scholarship. Pigot is the only driver to ever win four Mazda scholarships.

“My best memory was in December of 2009 at the Skip Barber Karting Shootout. I won my first scholarship from Mazda to compete in the Skip Barber National Championship. That Shootout kick-started my car racing career and began a relationship with Mazda that continues to this day.”

## **Round Two of the Continental Tire SportsCar Challenge for MX-5s**

After the season-opener at Daytona that saw all three Freedom Autosport Mazda teams finish in the top-10 of the ST (Street Tuner), round two is the two-hour Sebring 120 Friday afternoon at Sebring Raceway. 2015 series champions Chad McCumbee and Stevan McAleer (No. 25 ModSpace Mazda MX-5) teamed to finish sixth at Daytona, followed in ninth by Liam Dwyer and Andrew Carbonell (No. 26 Mazda MX-5) and tenth with Britt Casey Jr. and rookie Robby Foley, who was in his first Continental Tire series race (No. 27, Trumpf Mazda MX-5). Foley will return to the team as Casey’s teammate this week.

## **A New Era: The Mazda Prototype Lites are now known as the Mazda Prototype Challenge**

The series previously known as the Prototype Lites powered by Mazda is under a new name and a new lineup this season. The first two races of the season for the newly named Prototype Challenge presented by Mazda takes place Thursday and Friday. It will mark the debut of a new category, LMP3, as the top class, while the venerable Elan DP02 Prototype Lites chassis will now be known as the Mazda Prototype Challenge class. The entry list shows 12 new LMP3 cars entered, with 11 Mazda-powered MPC cars.



## **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](http://MazdaMotorsports.com), @MazdaRacing on Twitter, and MazdaMotorsports on Instagram and Facebook.

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