



The Cooper Tires USF2000 Championship Powered by Mazda debuted in 2010 and is a continuation of the highly-regarded USF2000 series which ran from 1990 through 2006, launching the careers of many of today's top drivers.

Sanctioned by INDYCAR and managed by Andersen Promotions, the series is the first official step on the Mazda Road to Indy ladder system. The top driver in the Championship class will earn a scholarship package from Mazda to advance to the Star Mazda Championship.

The series also is part of the MAZDASPEED Motorsports Development Ladder program which assists young drivers in advancing from the Skip Barber Racing School to USF2000.

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USF2000 Offers Tests to Top Skip Barber Candidates

PALMETTO, Fla. – The Cooper Tires USF2000 Championship Powered by Mazda is opening its doors to give up-and-coming drivers a taste of the next level car on the Mazda Road to Indy. The winners of the Skip Barber Winter and Summer Series presented by Mazda will be awarded a seat at the second annual Chris Griffis Memorial Mazda Road to Indy Open Test on October 10/11 at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

The test, dedicated to the memory of Sam Schmidt Motorsports' Firestone Indy Lights team manager, brings together the three levels of the Mazda Road to Indy Ladder system including the Star Mazda Championship Powered by Goodyear and Firestone Indy Lights. Hosted by INDYCAR, the outing not only offers all three series a jumpstart on the 2013 season but also showcases the ladder system to prospective teams and drivers.

"As a 1990 graduate of the Skip Barber organization myself, I know what a terrific training program they have put together over the years," said Dan Andersen, President and CEO of Andersen Promotions, the series promoter. "With so many of their graduates moving into our USF2000 Championship, it is only natural and logical that we should expose these talented drivers to the teams and cars of USF2000 at the IMS open test. It is my pleasure to offer tests to the two winners, and also express my thanks to Michael Culver and his fine staff for what they do in racing."

The winner of the 2012 Skip Barber Summer Series presented by Mazda, whose season concludes on October 6, will join 2011-2012 Skip Barber Winter Series presented by Mazda Champion and Rookie of the Year Jake Eidson at the test. With his Winter Series crown, Eidson, 17, of Littleton, Colo., will also receive a fully funded ride in the 2012 Skip Barber Racing School Championship Shoot-Out for a chance to win a seat in the 2013 USF2000 series.

"Skip Barber Racing School, USF2000 and Mazda continue to enhance the ability for promising young drivers to move up the Mazda Road to Indy ladder and to realize their dreams of becoming a professional driver," said Michael Culver, Chairman, CEO and Managing Member of the Skip Barber Racing School. "Racing is in our DNA; we are passionate about creating champions."

Skip Barber Racing School is the Official Racing School of the IZOD IndyCar Series and Mazda Road to Indy. The newly-created Skip Barber IndyCar Academy announced in April adds another step to the well-established development ladder system – a clearly-defined path for aspiring drivers. Being held for the inaugural year at Sebring International Raceway on January 25-27, 2013, 33 candidates will battle it out for a full scholarship in the 2013 Skip Barber Summer or Winter Series presented by Mazda. The deadline for applications is December 15, 2012.

INDYCAR's recently announced partnerships with British Formula Ford and Canadian F1600 (Quebec and Ontario) will see their series champions receiving a full day in a USF2000 car at the test. The partnership with the La Tam Challenge Series in Mexico will see the top-three drivers in that series receiving a one-day test with Star Mazda at Indianapolis.

Interest in the Cooper Tires USF2000 Championship Powered by Mazda has ballooned this year with seven new teams and record grids of over 30 entries. The series offers a scholarship package from Mazda to advance to the Star Mazda series – the next rung on the development ladder which currently fields its 2010 and 2011 champions Sage Karam and Petri Suvanto, respectively – as well as vital training in on and off-track skills via the Mazda Road to Indy Summit program.

USF2000 will be back in action on August 17/18 with the series' first triple-header event which will be held at Road America's 4.048-mile, 14-turn permanent road course in Elkhart Lake, Wis.

About Mazda: Mazda is the number-one brand for road-racers across North America. Thousands of Mazda powered grassroots racers compete in various classes with the SCCA and NASA highlighted by Spec Miata, the world's largest spec class with over 2,500 cars built. In 2006 Mazda established the *MAZDASPEED* Motorsports Development Ladder to assist racers in moving up through the ranks. In 2010 this was expanded to include the Mazda Road to Indy. Key to Mazda's success is strategic partnerships with the Skip Barber Racing School and Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. *MAZDASPEED* Motorsports is managed by Mazda North American Operations (MNAO). MNAO is headquartered in Irvine, Calif. and oversees the sales, marketing, parts and customer service support of Mazda vehicles in the United States, Canada and Mexico through nearly 900 dealers. Operations in Canada are managed by Mazda Canada, Inc., located in Ontario; and in Mexico by Mazda Motor de Mexico in Mexico City. Consumer information can be found at www.mazdausa.com with press information at www.mazdausamedia.com. Racers and fans can follow the action on Facebook (Mazdaspeed Motorsports).

About Cooper Tire & Rubber Company: Cooper Tire & Rubber Company is a global company with affiliates, subsidiaries and joint-ventures that specialize in the design, manufacture, marketing and sales of passenger car and light truck tires. The company also has subsidiaries that specialize in medium truck, motorcycle and racing tires.

With headquarters in Findlay, Ohio, Cooper Tire has manufacturing, sales, distribution, technical and design facilities within its family of companies located in 10 countries around the world.