



International Racers Go Head-to-head at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca

- Five European racers at first ever MX-5 Cup Global Invitational Race this weekend
- Two races with overall champion invited to train on Driver in the Loop simulator

Irvine / Leverkusen, 10 September 2016. After months of training and qualifying events, racers from around the world will face off this weekend at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in California, for the inaugural MX-5 Cup Global Invitational race. European racers from Poland, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Germany and Sweden, plus competitors from Japan, Australia and 10 Americans will be going head-to-head in identically prepared Mazda MX-5 Cup race cars.

All the European competitors qualified through Mazda's Friends of MX-5 initiative, which held a special training camp at the ParcMotor Circuit near Barcelona, Spain, in July. Driving 2016 Mazda MX-5 Global Cup cars, an initial 20 competitors took part in a number of racing, endurance, reaction and simulator assessments, with a knock-out process whittling that field down to the final five competing this weekend.

John Doonan, director of motorsports, Mazda North American Operations, said, "We're thrilled to have our overseas friends join us at our home track for what we hope will be the first of many such events in the years to come. With all cars being as identical as possible, it's a perfect showcase for racers to prove that no matter if you are on the highway, or on the track, driving matters."

Qualifying got off to a blistering start on Friday afternoon. The best 3 Qualifying times were driven by American drivers; the European drivers delivered great performances which will make the race weekend very exciting.

There will be two MX-5 Cup Global Invitational races over the weekend, the first on Saturday at 10:50am US Pacific time (7:50pm Central European Summer Time); the second on Sunday at 10:20am US Pacific time (7:20pm Central European Summer Time). Each race will be livestreamed on www.MazdaLIVE.com.

Races last 45-minutes. The driver who scores the most points between the two will be crowned champion and sent to Mazda Motorsports partner Multimatic to train on the "Driver in the Loop" (DIL) simulator. A successful simulation performance could lead to a one-day test in the Mazda Prototype that competes in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship series.

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The complete list of racers taking part is: Oliver Allwood (UK); Erik Blixt (Sweden); Anthony Crawford (Australia); John Dean II (USA); Mark Drennan (USA); Robby Foley (USA); Kamil Franczak (Poland); Gabriele Gardel (Switzerland); Enami Kitahira (Japan); Moritz Kranz (Germany); Ara Malkhassian (USA); Glenn McGee (USA); Sarah Montgomery (USA); Tim Probert (USA); Mike Sinclair (Australia); Nathaniel Sparks (USA); Chris Stone (USA); Aurora Straus (USA); Yuui Tsutsumi (Japan).

Additional series information and complete results can be found at www.MX-5Cup.com.

About Friends of MX-5

Launched in April 2016, Friends of MX-5 engages with car lovers everywhere, be they MX-5 owners or not. The invitation to join Friends of MX-5 is open to anyone across Europe who wants to share in the fun and passion of MX-5. The chance to win a race seat in the inaugural Global Mazda MX-5 Cup Invitational race was one of many remarkable incentives and prizes on offer to all Friends of MX-5. Full details can be found at the dedicated [Friends of MX-5 Facebook page](#).

About MX-5 Cup Cars

The MX-5 Cup race cars start as complete MX-5 road cars from the Mazda Hiroshima, Japan factory before being transported to engineering development partner Long Road Racing in Statesville, North Carolina where they are produced into a race car. The process includes disassembly of the production car, welding and paint of a full roll cage and interior, and assembly of the race car, adding more than 250 motorsports-specific parts. Other components of the car, including the Mazda SKYACTIV 2.0 litre engine are sealed to ensure even competition and a cost-effective platform. More information can be found online at www.mazdamotorsports.com.

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