

# A CHAMPION TAKES THE NEXT STEP UP THE LADDER

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*2007 Star Mazda Champion Dane Cameron will race for championship-winning Sierra Sierra Champ Car Atlantic team in 2008*

Dane Cameron, winner of the 2007 Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear -- and arguably the fastest-rising young star in open-wheel racing today - has signed to race for the championship-winning Sierra Sierra/ProWorks team in the 2008 Cooper Tires Presents the Champ Car Atlantic Championship Powered by Mazda.

Cameron, who turns 19 on October 18, has already undergone a seat fitting at the Sierra Sierra race shop in Minden, Nevada and will begin testing with his new team next week, following this weekend's Round Twelve season finale of the 2007 Star Mazda Championship at the American Le Mans Series' Monterey Sports Car Championships at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca on October 20.

"Nothing I've ever done in racing has felt as fast as what's happened in the last two weeks since I won the Star Mazda championship," says the native of Sonoma, California. "I'm honored, and relieved, to be the next graduate of the Mazda Motorsports Ladder and delighted to be racing for a championship-caliber team like Sierra Sierra next year. I'd like to thank my Star Mazda team, JDC Motorsports for taking a chance on me and delivering a championship season. Also Rob Finlay, Peggy Haas and Jackie Doty, and, of course, my father, Rick Cameron, who also engineers my cars. There may be only one person in the car, but racing is a team sport and a lot of people helped me get where I am today."

Cameron is the latest graduate of the unique Mazda Motorsports Ladder program, the only manufacturer-supported driver development program reaching all the way from karting to Champ Car. Raphael Matos, the 2005 Star Mazda champion also chose Sierra Sierra/ProWorks as his next step up the ladder and won the 2007 Champ Car Atlantic championship. Matos will graduate to the ranks of the Champ Car World Series in 2008. 2006 Star Mazda champion Adrian Carrio just completed his first season in the Atlantic series with Genoa Racing.

Cameron's Star Mazda Championship season has, so far, included three race wins, five pole positions, four podium and two top-4 finishes. He only finished out of the top-4 twice during the first eleven races, and clinched the championship on October 5 during the ALMS Petit Le Mans weekend at Road Atlanta.

He is only one of only two rookies to win the Star Mazda championship in the 17-year history of the series and will claim the lion's share of a prize fund worth almost \$1.5 million, including a Mazda-sponsored full-season drive in the Champ Car Atlantic series. Cameron will also collect additional prizes including \$100,000 for winning the championship, \$10,000 for being the top rookie and a new Mazda RX-8 sports car.

"We're delighted to have Dane driving the Sierra Sierra/ProWorks car next year because he has a tremendous amount of talent and we expect him to contend for both Rookie of the Year honors and the championship," says

Sierra Sierra team manager Richard Raeder. "Sierra Sierra started out as a Star Mazda Championship team in 2000 - 2001, so our ongoing association with Mazda and the motorsports ladder program is both logical and beneficial for us when they graduate drivers who are obviously open-wheel racing's stars of tomorrow like Raphael Matos and Dane Cameron."

Cameron arrives at this major step in his career not out of the blue, but rather via an accomplished climb up the open-wheel ladder. Cameron has won three championships (and finished second in another), as well as winning two Rookie of the Year awards in the past three years. He was the 2006 F2000 Rookie of the Year and finished second in the championship. As a Team USA Scholarship driver, he won the 2006 Palmer Audi Winter Championship in Europe. In 2005 Cameron was the SCCA Formula Jim Russell Series champion and Rookie of the Year. His karting career, beginning in 2000, was similarly successful, including the 2003 Jim Russell Karting 80cc Junior Shifter Championship and a 2004 finalist in the Red Bull Driver Search.

"I remember seeing Dane at our races when he was not even old enough to enter the hot pit area and to have him and the Cameron name-back in the series is a real thrill," said Champ Car Atlantic Managing Director Vicki O'Connor. "His uncle and father played integral roles for one of the most successful Atlantic teams in the history of our series, and now Dane has the opportunity to add to the Cameron family legacy with one of the most successful teams currently competing in Atlantic. I wish Dane and Sierra Sierra/ProWorks the best of luck as they prepare for the Champ Car Atlantic Championship in 2008."

Cameron also recently enjoyed one of the ancillary benefits of high-profile success in the Star Mazda Championship; he was chosen to co-drive - along with regular driver Michael Valiante - the Chip Ganassi w/Felix Sabates #19 Z-Line Designs/Mission Residential Riley Daytona Prototype in the Grand-Am Rolex Series season finale SunChaser 1000 at Miller Motorsports Park on September 15.

Cameron's climb up the ladder, and his successful quest for the Star Mazda championship, was made possible by a variety of sponsors; including the JDC Motorsports, the Finlay Motorsports Driver Development Program, Lynx Racing, Mockett.com, Ocean Tomo, Rett.org, Nearburg Exploration, O'Neill Construction, Red Line Oil and Sparco USA.

Cameron will continue to be a member of the Finlay Motorsports Driver Development program as he races for Sierra Sierra in the Atlantic Championship. ARCA RE/MAX standout Michael McDowell is the other member of the highly successful program created by racer/businessman Rob Finlay.

The series that has helped accelerate Cameron's career into overdrive is the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear. Over the past seventeen years, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear has grown into one of the most prolific, successful and richest driver development series in all of auto racing with this year's prize fund approaches \$1.5 million.

Many top drivers began, or accelerated, their careers in the Star Mazda Championship. Recent alumni, in addition to Raphael Matos, include such top open-wheel racers as Champ Car star Graham Rahal, IRL standout Marco Andretti and the most recent American to race in F1, Scott Speed. Also on the list is Michael McDowell, the 2004 Star Mazda champion who has raced Champ Cars, Daytona Prototypes and has just completed a star-making rookie season in the ARCA RE/MAX series.

The Star Mazda Championship is now a major step on the Mazda Motorsports Ladder, adding to the already substantial array of benefits that come from racing in the series. The Motorsports Ladder is a unique scholarship program that reaches all the way from karting to Champ Car. The winner of a shootout among 2007 karting champions will get a scholarship in the 2008 Skip Barber series, while the Skip Barber champion moves up to Star Mazda. The Star Mazda champion moves up to the Champ Car Atlantic Series Powered by Mazda and the Atlantic champion gets \$2 million from Champ Car toward a Champ Car drive.

"Our congratulations to our newest champion, Dane Cameron, and we're certain he will be as big a star in Atlantic and, ultimately, Champ Car, as he was with us," says Star Mazda Championship CEO Gary Rodrigues. "The Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear offers a golden opportunity for young drivers to develop their talent in one of the most successful and affordable open wheel series in the world today. And as we say goodbye and good luck to one champion, we'd also like to welcome the series' newest hotshoe, Joel Miller, winner of the 2007 BFGoodrich/Skip Barber National Championship Presented by Mazda."

The season-finale Round Twelve of the 2007 Star Mazda Championship begins with open testing on Thursday, October 18. Star Mazda Championship practice sessions are scheduled from 8:00 am to 8:40 am and 1:20 pm to 2:00 pm Friday, October 19. Qualifying to set the grid for the race will take place from 8:00 am to 8:40 am Saturday, October 20, with the 45-minute Star Mazda Championship season finale scheduled to take the green flag at 12:30 pm Saturday afternoon.

Star Mazda races are broadcast on the SPEED Channel, with the Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca event scheduled to air on Saturday, October 27 at 3:30 pm. The race will be re-broadcast on Monday, October 29th at 3:00 pm and again at 4:00 am. All times are ET.

For more information on the Star Mazda Championship and its drivers, as well as the Mazda Motorsports ladder system, please visit [www.starmazda.com](http://www.starmazda.com) [1] and [www.mazdausa.com](http://www.mazdausa.com) [2].

For more information about Sierra Sierra, please visit [www.sierrasierra.com](http://www.sierrasierra.com) [3] and [www.pro-works.com](http://www.pro-works.com) [4].

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