

# MAZDASPEED MOTORSPORTS 2008 MID-SEASON REVIEW

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[Authors Garth Stein & Sam Moses Join Playboy Mazda MX-5 Cup Race](#)

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**August 8, 2008 (Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin).** The 2008 race season started off on a high note, both on-track and off. An underdog win by the Castrol Syntec SpeedSource Mazda RX-8 team at the Rolex 24 at Daytona saw Mazda take its 22nd class win in the American 24-Hour classic. Less than a month later, all eyes turned to the unification of open wheel racing. While that was welcome news for race fans, it created a great deal of additional work for many organizations. Mazda was hit especially hard with four Mazda-specific series directly impacted, and has spent the past six months in rebuilding schedules for 2008 and 2009.

Robert Davis, Senior Vice President, Product Development and Quality, Mazda North American Operations, reflected on the season so far. "As racing fans, we were thrilled to see open-wheel racing come together again. But it was not without a cost, and one of the costs was our having to rebuild race schedules and TV packages with no time to spare. I'm proud of the effort put forth by Mazda and all of our partners, ranging from series sponsors like Playboy to sanctioning bodies like IMSA, to individual race promoters, to our teams, and it was very much a collective effort." Davis added, "On-track, our teams have managed to stay focused and we've added another four wins in Grand-Am Rolex GT and three in SPEED World Challenge. Both of those seasons are far from over and we hope to keep the fight going to the last races."

## The Olympics of Motorsports?

While fans of human powered sports are tuning in to Beijing for the *other* Olympics, motorsports road racing fans are in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin for the Road America *Road Race Showcase* to be held August 7-10. Nearly 200 cars will be competing in eight different race series. Mazda alone will have almost 100 of those drivers and cars representing over a dozen countries competing in the following classes.

- American Le Mans Series (LMP2 class)

- SPEED World Challenge Touring Cars
- Cooper Tires Atlantic Championship Powered by Mazda (Double-header)
- Star Mazda Championship Presented by Goodyear
- BFGoodrich/Skip Barber National Presented by Mazda (Double-header)
- Playboy Mazda MX-5 Cup

**MAZDASPEED2008 season highlights through July include:**

- Four wins in Grand-Am GT for the RX-8 including both of the "endurance" races. SpeedSource drivers Sylvain Tremblay & Nick Ham have closed to within six points of the points lead with two races remaining.
- Three wins in SPEED World Challenge with four Mazda drivers ranked in the top ten in points.
- Strong fields in all of the Mazda Ladder Series races.
- The inaugural Mazda Grand Prix of Portland.
- The MAZDASPEED Motorsports Driver Development supported drivers are doing extremely well in 2008.
  - **Dane Cameron** - Racing in the Cooper Tires Atlantic Championship Powered by Mazda -- Currently seventh in points after five of 11 races. Third among rookies. Three top-five finishes.
  - **Connor De Phillippi** - Racing in the BFGoodrich/Skip Barber National Presented by Mazda - Currently eighth in points after eight of 14 races. Three podium finishes. Has led two races.
  - **Joel Miller** - Racing in the Star Mazda Championship Presented by Goodyear -- Currently first in points after five of 12 races. One win, four podium finishes.
  - **Brad Rampelberg** - Racing in the Playboy Mazda MX-5 Cup -- Currently second in points after three of eight races. One win and two podium finishes.
  - **Jason Saini** - Racing in the SCCA Pro Racing SPEED World Challenge Touring Car Championship -- Currently fifth in points after seven of ten races. Leading rookie in series. One win, two podium finishes.

**Open Competition Series Updates:**

**Series: Grand-Am Rolex Series - GT (11 of 13 races completed)**

**Recap:** In the Manufacturers Championship Mazda is currently tied for second in points with Porsche just six points behind Pontiac with two races remaining. SpeedSource #70 is currently second in team standings after 11 of 13 races. The team has scored three wins (including Rolex 24 @ Daytona), and six podium finishes. Drivers Sylvain Tremblay & Nick Ham are now just six points behind the leading Pontiac duo, having made up ground over the last four races. SpeedSource #69 is currently seventh in team standings after 11 of 13 races including a breakthrough win at Watkins Glen. Emil Assentato is currently third in the chase for the Bob Akin Award for sportsman drivers. Both Racers Edge #30 and HyperSport # 40 have scored multiple top-ten finishes and are currently 12th and 13th in points.

**Next Up:** August 29-31 @ Thunderbolt Park, New Jersey

**Series:** *SCCA Pro Racing SPEED World Challenge Touring Cars (7 of 10 races complete)*

**Recap:** Mazda is currently second in points behind Acura in the manufacturers chase. The defending champions from Tri-Point Engineering have scored one win, and two podium finishes, while Tindol Motorsports has two wins and three podium finishes.

**Next Up:** August 10 @ Road America

**Series:** *American Le Mans Series - LMP2 (6 of 11 races completed)*

**Recap:** Mazda is currently third in LMP2 manufacturers points behind Porsche and Acura. B-K Motorsports is currently seventh in team points after six of 11 races. The team is preparing for the race debut of an all new Lola coupe at the Petit Le Mans.

**Next Up:** August 9 @ Road America

#### **MAZDA SPEC SERIES UPDATES:**

**Series:** *Cooper Tires Atlantic Championship Powered by Mazda (5 of 11 races completed)*

**Recap:** With five of 11 races completed thus far in Atlantic Championship, the championship battle remains wide open for the top prize in the *MAZDASPEED* Motorsports Driver Development Ladder. The first five races have produced five different winners, including a three drivers who celebrated their first career victories. Swiss driver Simona De Silvestro opened the 35th Anniversary season of Atlantic with her first career victory in Long Beach, becoming just the second woman in series history to earn a race victory. Round 2 at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca went to popular Canadian racer James Hinchliffe, who celebrated in Victory Circle for the second time in his Atlantic career but the first time since 2006. Junior Strous dominated the Mont-Tremblant weekend en route to his first career victory. The Edmonton doubleheader was split between the Jonathans; Bomarito and Summerton. Just 23 points separate first and fifth in points as the teams prepare for the second half.

**Next up:** August 9 & 10 @ Road America -- The second "doubleheader" weekend for the season.

**Series:** *Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear (5 of 12 races completed)*

***Recap:***

Seven months through the year but only five races into a 12-event schedule thoroughly scrambled by the Champ Car/IRL unification, the Star Mazda Championship presented by Goodyear has seen four different winners.

- Sebring - Joel Miller
- Miller Motorsports Park - John Edwards
- Watkins Glen - Charles Hall
- Portland #1 - Tom Gladdis
- Portland #2 - John Edwards

Miller, now leads an extremely tight championship battle with just 11 points separating first from third. With four class victories, Vancouver native Chris Cumming leads the Expert Series for drivers 30 to 44 years of age, while California Chuck Hulse, with three class wins, leads the Master Series for drivers 45 and older. Diversity among Star Mazda Championship drivers is at an all-time high, including competitors from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Brazil, U.K., Ireland, Gibraltar, Poland and the Philippines. There are three fast young female drivers, drivers ranging in age from 16 to 64, a father/son team and a brother/ sister team.

***Next up:*** August 9 @ Road America

***Series:*** **BFGoodrich/Skip Barber National Presented by Mazda (8 of 14 races completed)**

**Recap:**

Through round eight of 14, the 2008 BFGoodrich/Skip Barber National Presented by Mazda season has been - as usual - extremely competitive and tremendously close-fought. How close? Well, consider that these first six races have totaled 91 laps - and there have been 30 official lead changes - 10 of those in the first Mosport race alone.

- Sebring #1 - Gabby Chaves
- Sebring #2 - Fabio Orsolon
- VIR #1 - Gabby Chaves
- VIR #2 - Gabby Chaves
- Mosport #1 - Josef Newgarden
- Mosport #2 - Conor Daly
- Barber Motorsports Park #1 - Conor Daly
- Barber Motorsports Park #2 - Josef Newgarden

The points battle has become a four racer battle with Newgarden leading over Felipe Polehito, Orsolon, and Daly all within nine points.

**Next up:** August 9 & 10 @ Road America

**Notes:** The 2007 Skip Barber Champion will graduate to the 2008 Star Mazda series as a part of the Mazda ladder program.

**Series:** **SCCA Pro Racing Playboy Mazda MX-5 Cup (3 of 8 races completed)**

**Recap:** Three races into the eight-race SCCA Pro Racing Playboy Mazda MX-5 Cup schedule, Eric Foss, of Fort Worth, Texas, leads the Championship point standings on the strength of a perfect three-for-three podium finishes. Foss topped a record 30-car field at Road Atlanta (including five female drivers) to take his first MX-5 Cup win at the season opener. Foss backed it up with a runner-up finish at Mosport, and third at Portland. Robert Huffmaster, the 2007 SCCA Touring 3 National Champion won the very wet Mosport race while 2007 SCCA Spec Miata National Champion Brad Rampelberg winning at Portland and is challenging for the championship. Thirteen points separate Foss from third place Todd Buras. A fun highlight of the Portland round was the race within a race - the battle of the authors, Garth "The Art of Racing in The Rain" Stein vs Sam "Fast Guys, Rich Guys, and Idiots" Moses. Sam edged Garth as the highest placed scribe.

**Next up:** August 10 @ Road America

**Notes:** The 2008 MX-5 Cup Champion will be awarded a Mazda drive in the 2009 SPEED World Challenge as a part of the Mazda ladder program.

**Club Racers Getting Ready:**

Which club racer will be able to jump to the pros in the 2009 Playboy Mazda MX-5 Cup? In 2006 the competition was open to any club racer in a Mazda or Mazda-powered who won an SCCA National Championship and four racers were eligible. Andrew Caddell went on to win the first shootout and backed it up with a pair of wins in the MX-5 Cup. In 2007 the competition was expanded to include NASA and the shootout included nine champions.?

### **Even our non-track activities are race related**

Robert Davis was recently nominated to the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America (MSHoF) Board of Trustees. Robert will be hosting a table at the annual MSHoF induction, August 13 in Detroit.

*MAZDASPEED* Motorsports Business Development Manager John Doonan currently serves on the MSHoF Board of Directors, while *MAZDASPEED* Communications Officer Dean Case has been active with the nominating committee for many years.

At the recent Lyn St. James Women in the Winners Circle lunch, Mazda was recognized with an Opportunity Award for their support of women racers. Mazda Marketing Manager Jim Jordan was specifically acknowledged for his contributions to the program. Six women are racing with Mazda in Road America this weekend.

On any given weekend, there are more Mazdas on the road-race tracks of America than any other brand of vehicle. At the track, you'll see MX-5 Miata, RX-8, MAZDA3, MAZDA6, RX-7 and other vintage Mazda models competing, because every Mazda has the Soul of a Sports Car. In fact, the largest road-racing class in the U.S. is the SCCA's Spec Miata class, with nearly 1,500 first- and second-generation Miatas tearing up America's racetracks, making it the most-raced production car in the world. Mazda's involvement in motorsports extends to its relationship with Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, one of the world's premier road-racing circuits, and the Skip Barber Schools for driving and racing.

Headquartered in Irvine, Calif., Mazda North American Operations 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, Canada, and in Mexico by Mazda Motor de Mexico in Mexico City.

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For more information on *MAZDASPEED* Motorsports Development, visit: [www.MazdaspeedDevelopment.com](http://www.MazdaspeedDevelopment.com) [5]

For more information on the various Mazda spec series, visit: [www.atlantic-championship.com](http://www.atlantic-championship.com) [6] | [www.starmazda.com](http://www.starmazda.com) [7] | [www.skipbarber.com](http://www.skipbarber.com) [8] | [www.mx-5cup.com](http://www.mx-5cup.com) [9]

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