

Piscitell Leads Championship Entering Road America

## **ELKHART LAKE, Wis -**

The SCCA Pro Racing Playboy Mazda MX-5 Cup is back on the track at historic Road America in Elkhart Lake, Wis., sharing a weekend with the NASCAR Nationwide Series in its series debut at the legendary road course.

The MX-5 Cup enters Round Four of the 11-race Championship with any number of drivers still in the hunt for the title as just 22 points separate first from sixth position.

Leading that charge this week is 21-year-old **Justin Piscitell**, whose consistent finishes in the No. 89 Team MER DAMG Worldwide Mazda MX-5 have given him 158 points to take an eight point edge in the championship. While last year's season runner-up is still searching for his first-career win, two fourths and a third place him in the driver's seat just past the quarter pole.



*Justin Piscitell leads the MX-5 Cup field to Road America.*

While Piscitell, who is in just his third season of racing, tops the standings, another young gun is eight points in arrears. **Michael Cooper**, a rookie to professional racing and another relative newcomer to motorsports, ran an impressive third in the season opener at Virginia International Raceway and has carried that momentum forward in the No. 84 AMG Racing/Bromante Landscaping&Design Mazda MX-5.

While he sits third in the Championship, **Brad Rampelberg** is probably the driver most likely to break out and remains the favorite in the championship. Rampelberg, in the No. 4 AMG Racing/Mazda/Cobalt Brakes Mazda MX-5, posted a win and a runner-up finish in the first two events and was on his way to a second win in round three at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. Contact on the final lap, however, pushed him off the track and to a 17<sup>th</sup> place finish, costing him a lead in the championship – for now.

**Nick Evans** is the third driver in his early 20s in the top four of the championship. Driving the No. 28 Team MER/Mazda/Sparco MX-5 as a teammate to Piscitell, the Ohio State University student has earned a trio of top-10 finishes and is only 19 points behind.

**Mat Pombo** earned his first MX-5 Cup win at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, but was docked 30 championship points by the stewards after his contact with Rampelberg. The penalty leaves him 21 points behind in the hunt in his No. 01 PFM Pombo Racing/Range of MotionATL/Carbotech MX-5.

ALARA Racing has a trio of drivers that are contenders at every event. **Jesse Combs** sits just 22 points out of the championship lead in the No. 77 coolgas.com Mazda MX-5. Teammate **Ara Malkhassian** is coming off a season-best second-place finish at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in the No. 11 ALARA Racing/Bulldog Productions MX-5, while **Lyonel Kent** is just a race removed from his win at Virginia International Raceway in the No. 13 ALARA Racing/Bulldog Productions machine.

**Harrison Williams**, in the No. 00 ALARA Racing/Albrect & Associates MX-5, and **Tim Probert**, in the No. 26 machine, also will operate from the ALARA Racing stable this weekend.

Once again joining the prolific MER team is **Jeff Mosing**, driving the No. 30 Team MER/RaceNowForAutism/Frank's International MX-5, who sits seventh in the championship after a trio of top-10 finishes on the season.

**Mark Carpenter** joins Rampelberg and Cooper under the AMG umbrella at Road America. Carpenter has also run near the front this season, turning the fastest race lap at Road Atlanta in the No. 14 AMG Racing/GGS Technical Publication Mazda MX-5.

In Atlanta, **Mat Pombo** defended his home turf in by qualifying on the pole, and then leading his share of the race. In attempting a last-lap pass for the win, he fell to third, but remains tied for third in the championship and now has the confidence to race with the top drivers in the series.

Mat Pombo will be joined again in Elkhart Lake by **Jimmy Burke** in the No. 23 Pombo Racing/PFM Engineering/Carbotech machine and brother **Mark Pombo**, making his first appearance this season in the No. 63 PFM/Pombo Racing Mazda MX-5.

The beauty of running a spec-series is that driver talent really has a chance to shine through. In MX-5 Cup, however, the additional alluring aspect is the car; the nimble, dependable and undeniably fun Mazda MX-5.

Mechanically, all MX-5 Cup cars will remain essentially stock, as delivered from the dealer, with only bolt-on modifications to the intake and exhaust systems. While the stock MX-5 Miata produces 170 hp, an MX-5 Cup car will produce in excess of 200 hp. All MX-5 Cup vehicles will be equipped with a six-speed manual transmission and may be run with the optionally available limited-slip rear differential.

Suspension will incorporate a fully-adjustable coil-over kit with double-adjustable shock absorbers and specified spring rates, as well as adjustable anti-roll bars front and rear. All cars will run a 17x8" wheel of a specified weight – again, to level the field and minimize costs, as well as the spec BFGoodrich g-Force R1 Tire. Additionally, brake pads, fluid and lines will be upgraded to racing components.

All MX-5 Cup cars will run with full safety equipment, including an eight-point roll-cage welded into the car, a racing seat, racing seatbelts and will incorporate a fire-extinguishing system.

As always, all components for the cars will be sold directly through MAZDASPEED Motorsports Development, which also supports the program monetarily with contingency awards to successful drivers.

**Event/Circuit:** Road America  
14-turn, 4.048-miles permanent road course

**Qualifying:** Saturday, June 18, at 8:40 a.m. (CDT)

**Green Flag:** Sunday, June 19, at 2:30 p.m. (CDT)

**Race Length:** 45-minute timed race.

**Television:** Will be aired on cable syndication. Check [www.mx-5cup.com](http://www.mx-5cup.com) or [www.mazdaracing.tv](http://www.mazdaracing.tv) for a complete broadcast schedule.

**Media Notes:** Results are available on the AP SportsWire, via e-mail and on the Internet at [www.mx-5cup.com](http://www.mx-5cup.com) .

**Timing/Scoring:** Live Timing & Scoring and lap notes via the SCCA® Pit Board are available for all sessions through [www.mx-5cup.com](http://www.mx-5cup.com) .

**Track Records:**

**Qualifying Lap:** 2:38.602 (91.882 mph), Todd Buras, 2008

**Race Lap:** 2:37.784 (92.359 mph), Christian Franck, 2008

**Average Speed:** 89.962 mph, Todd Lamb, 2009

**Margin of Victory:** 0.596-second, Ryan Schimsk over Eric Foss, 2008

**Previous Winners:**

2009: Todd Lamb

2008: Ryan Schimsk

2006: Jason Saini