

Piscitell Sweeps Friday MX-5 Cup Practice at Autobahn

JOLIET, III. - Justin Piscitell, of Weston, Conn., swept the pair of Friday SCCA Pro Racing Playboy Mazda MX-5 Cup practices, backing up his morning lead by also sitting atop the afternoon session at Autobahn Country Club during the Harrah's Autobahn Grand Prix presented by Mazda weekend.

After topping the charts with a best time of 2:44.512 (77.903 mph) in the morning session, Piscitell drove the No. 89 Team MER/DAMG Worldwide Mazda MX-5 even quicker in the afternoon's 30-minute practice. The 21-year-old ended the afternoon with a time of 2:44.481 (77.917 mph), exactly one-half second ahead of Michael Cooper, of Syossett, N.Y., in second.



Justin Piscitell swept Friday practice at Autobahn Country Club.

Cooper, who was fourth in the morning in his No. 84 AMG Racing/Bromante Landscaping & Design MX-5, was the only other driver to dip below the 2-minute, 45-second barrier with a time of 2:44.981 (77.681 mph).

Piscitell and Cooper each earned their first MX-5 Cup wins in the doubleheader at New Jersey Motorsports Park, the previous stop in the Championship.

Brad Rampelberg, of San Jose, Calif., was third in the afternoon after running second in the morning session. Rampelberg posted a time of 2:45.571 (77.404 mph) behind the wheel of the No. 4 AMG Racing/Mazda/Cobalt Brakes MX-5. With a slightly faster morning time of 2:45.334 (77.515 mph), Rampelberg also sits third on the combined charts.

Nick Evans' lap of 2:45.702 (77.343 mph) in the No. 28 Team MER/Mazda/Sparco MX-5 placed him fourth in the afternoon session. Like Rampelberg, Evans was just a little bit faster in the morning session, where his lap of 2:45.555 (77.412 mph) also had him in fourth position on the time charts.

After completing the 19-turn, 3.56-mile course with a time of 2:46.010 (77.200 mph) on his final lap of the afternoon session, Mark Carpenter moved to fifth in the session and on the combined charts in the No. 14 AMG Racing/GGS Technical Publication MX-5.

Including Ara Malkhassian (No. 11 ALARA Racing/Bulldog Productions MX-5), who turned a lap 2:46.047 (77.183 mph) in the morning session, the top six drivers on the combined charts fall under the current MX-5 Cup qualifying record set a season ago. The current record, held by Todd Lamb, is 2:46.142 (77.138 mph) and will almost certainly fall this afternoon.

The SCCA Pro Racing Playboy Mazda MX-5 Cup qualifies at 5:15 p.m. CDT on Friday afternoon for Saturday's first of two races on the weekend. To follow each session's notes and timing, please visit www.mx-5cup.com.

Follow the SCCA Pro Racing Playboy Mazda MX-5 Cup on Twitter @MazdaMX5Cup.