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Fiat 500 Driver Jonathan Start Carries Point Lead into 2012 Season Finale Weekend

- Three Race Rounds Scheduled at Sonoma to Decide Season Championship

August 22, 2012, Auburn Hills, Mich. - The 2012 season championship is on the line this weekend at Sonoma, Calif., in the World Challenge Touring Car B-spec series. Michigan-native Jonathan Start is looking to wrap up the B-spec title at the California road course in the No. 00 Fiat 500.

Start carries a 41-point advantage into the weekend as B-spec competitors will challenge the 12-turn, 1.99-mile road course three times in two days – a pair of 25-minute timed events separated by a 15-minute break on Saturday and a 40-minute timed event on Sunday will complete the nine-race 2012 schedule.

"This is the first time I've raced here at Sonoma," Start said. "We're looking for strong finishes in all three races and hopefully we can bring home the championship. That doesn't mean that I'm not going for the top spot. I'm going to push hard."

In April, Start got the inaugural season of Touring Car B-spec competition off to a fast start by posting back-to-back wins at Miller Motorsports Park in Utah and followed up with a fourth the next day. The series traveled across the border in June to Canada (Canadian Tire Motorsports Park, Bowmanville, Ontario) for the second event weekend where Start posted three third-place finishes.

"The Fiat 500, it's been phenomenal," said Start who is racing his first season in the pro ranks "The performance and durability has been unbelievable. I really enjoyed racing this category, and I hope the B-spec series takes off. It's just so much fun to race this fast Fiat 500."

Modifications for racing in the series are limited to shocks, springs and the required safety equipment.

"This inaugural season of B-spec competition is a testament of the solid engineering and durability behind the Fiat 500," said Tim Kuniskis, Head of the FIAT Brand for North America, Chrysler Group LLC. "We're looking forward to the exciting conclusion of the Pirelli World Challenge season this weekend and we wish Jonathan the best of luck as he focuses on bringing home the championship."

SRT Road Racing Manager Gary Johnson is looking for a continuation of the high performance level at Sonoma.

"The Fiat 500 should be very strong at Sonoma this weekend," he said. "Jonathan had a very quick start this season with two wins at the opening weekend at Miller Motorsports Park and has been competing extremely hard ever since. He's leading the driver championship point standings and with some good results this weekend in front of his family members, including his father (Tom), Jonathan should be able to bring home the first World Challenge B-spec Championship for the Fiat brand. Our team has a lot of faith in Jonathan to go out and run the final three races while being totally focused on the championship goal."

Qualifying is scheduled for Friday at 12:15 p.m. (Pacific time). The first of Saturday's back-to-back B-spec races starts at 4:10 p.m. (Pacific time). Teams will take a 15-minute break before starting the second race. Sunday's race is scheduled to get the green flag at 9:50 a.m. (Pacific time).

This weekend's Pirelli World Challenge Series' Touring Car B-Spec races from Sonoma will be streamed live online at world-challengeTV.com. Live audio from Friday's qualifying session will be available at the same site at 12:15 p.m. (Pacific time).

The coverage continues Saturday with live video from the back-to-back B-Spec races starting at 4:10 p.m. (Pacific time). There's a 15-minute break between races. The final B-Spec race of the season and third of the weekend is set for Sunday at 9:50 a.m. (Pacific time).

(After 6 of 9 rounds)

1. JONATHAN START 692
2. Craig Capaldi 651
3. Andre Rapone 480
4. Sage Marie 335
5. Jim Kenzie 314
6. Peter Schwartzott Jr. 262
7. Shaun Bailey 252
8. Russell Smith 230
9. Conner Ford 190
10. P.J. Groenke 165

About the FIAT Brand

The FIAT Brand stands for discovery through passionate self-expression. It encourages people to be in charge of their lives, live confidently and celebrate the smallest of things with infectious excitement. That philosophy is embodied by the North American introduction of the iconic Fiat 500 or Cinquecento – a small car that lives big. Italian at heart and rooted in a rich heritage, the 500 is synonymous with modern simple design blending form, function and a pride of ownership that is genuine.

Reminiscent of the original Cinquecento, the 2012 Fiat 500 and Fiat 500c (Cabrio) build on the vehicle's global popularity. Since its initial launch in 2007, more than 800,000 Fiat 500 vehicles have been sold in more than 80 countries around the world. The model's unquestionable popularity is the result of the Fiat 500's great ability to deliver unmatched personalization options with advanced solutions in terms of quality, engine and passenger comfort. In addition to success on the sales front, the Fiat 500 has earned more than 80 awards, including being named the 2008 European Car of the Year, 2009 World Car Design of the Year, Best New Engine of 2010 (FIAT MultiAir Turbo) and a 2012 "Recommended Pick" by Consumer Guide.

About SRT Motorsports

The engineering expertise within SRT extends well beyond our street vehicles. It is a little known fact, but technical support for the Chrysler Group's motorsports program is provided by the astute engineers at SRT. Lessons learned on the track directly translate to improved vehicles for our customers. SRT Motorsports is expanding its racing presence this year and look for more news from pit lane.

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