

ST. PETERSBURG, FL, March 24, 2013 – The weather was drastically different this morning when the Cooper Tires USF2000 Championship Powered by Mazda contenders assembled for the Peninsula Pipeline Grand Prix of St. Petersburg. The oppressive mugginess of Saturday afternoon had been replaced by cool, misty conditions, but that made little difference to Scott Hargrove who once again left his competitors far behind as he drove to a clear victory for locally based team Cape Motorsports with Wayne Taylor Racing. Hargrove, who had started from the pole, led all 21 green-flag laps around the 1.8-mile, 14-turn street circuit to claim his third win from four starts this season.

The 18-year-old from Vancouver, B.C., Canada, has already eked out a commanding lead in the point standings, 122 to 79, over top rookie Wyatt Gooden, from Cleveland, Ohio, who claimed his second successive podium finish for the rapidly emerging Minnesota-based Afterburner Autosport team in the #17 Ohio Center for Sports Psychology/Pedal Power entry.

Another Canadian teenager, 15-year-old Jesse Lazare, from Montreal, Que, Canada, completed the podium after another extremely impressive drive for Pabst Racing Services.

Hargrove's task was made easier when teammate Neil Alberico once again struck misfortune – for the third time in four races. The young Californian, who entered the season as a strong favorite for title honors on the first step of the Mazda Road to Indy, was due to start second but was called into the pits at the end of the pace lap with a braking problem.

Gooden took full advantage to follow Hargrove through the tight Turn One on the opening lap, followed by Dutchman Jeroen Slaghekke (#32 Carriere/W-H Sports Group-Cape Motorsports with Wayne Taylor Racing), Stefan Rzedzinski (#93 CanTorque/Christenson Developments/Goldmark Diesel/Calroc Equipment/Red Line Oil-JDC MotorSports), Lazare (#21 Door Doctor Inc.), Brandon Newey (#98 Curb Records/Calcium Pro/USANA/Miller Oils/OMP/Bell Helmets-Afterburner Autosport/BHA with Curb-Agajanian), Danilo Estrela (#11 Belardi Auto Racing) and the rest of the pack.

As Hargrove pulled away in the lead aboard the #38 Analytic Systems/Race Energy/Metal Action/Skip Barber Racing/Bell Racing entry, Gooden initially had his hands full with a huge pack of Van Diemen-Mazdas in his wake, but he gradually inched clear to cement his runner-up position.

Slaghekke held third until tangling with Rzedzinski on the 19th lap. The incident allowed Lazare to move into the final podium place, while Estrela, who had passed Newey on Lap 2, just held onto fourth following a race-long battle.

Garett Grist (#7 DaVinci Foods-Andretti Autosport) started in 13th and ran in 10th for most of the race but made a few moves in the final stages and took advantage of the incident between Slaghekke and Rzedzinski to finish a fine sixth ahead of Jason Wolfe (#23 Wolfe Trucking Inc.-Pabst Racing Services). Grist also earned the Tilton Hard Charger Award for positions gained.

Scott Rettich (Alliance Autosport), from Camden, Ohio, continued his perfect form in the National Class Presented by SCCA Formula Enterprises, winning comfortably.

Additional awards included the PFC Award to the winning car owners of Cape Motorsports with Wayne Taylor Racing and Alliance Autosport; the Staubli Award to Hargrove; and the National Class Masters Award Presented by Elite Engines/Comprent to Rettich.

After four races in 10 days, the championship will now take a mini-break before resuming for Round 5, the only oval race of the season at Lucas Oil Raceway in Indianapolis for the traditional "Night Before the 500" on Saturday, May 25.