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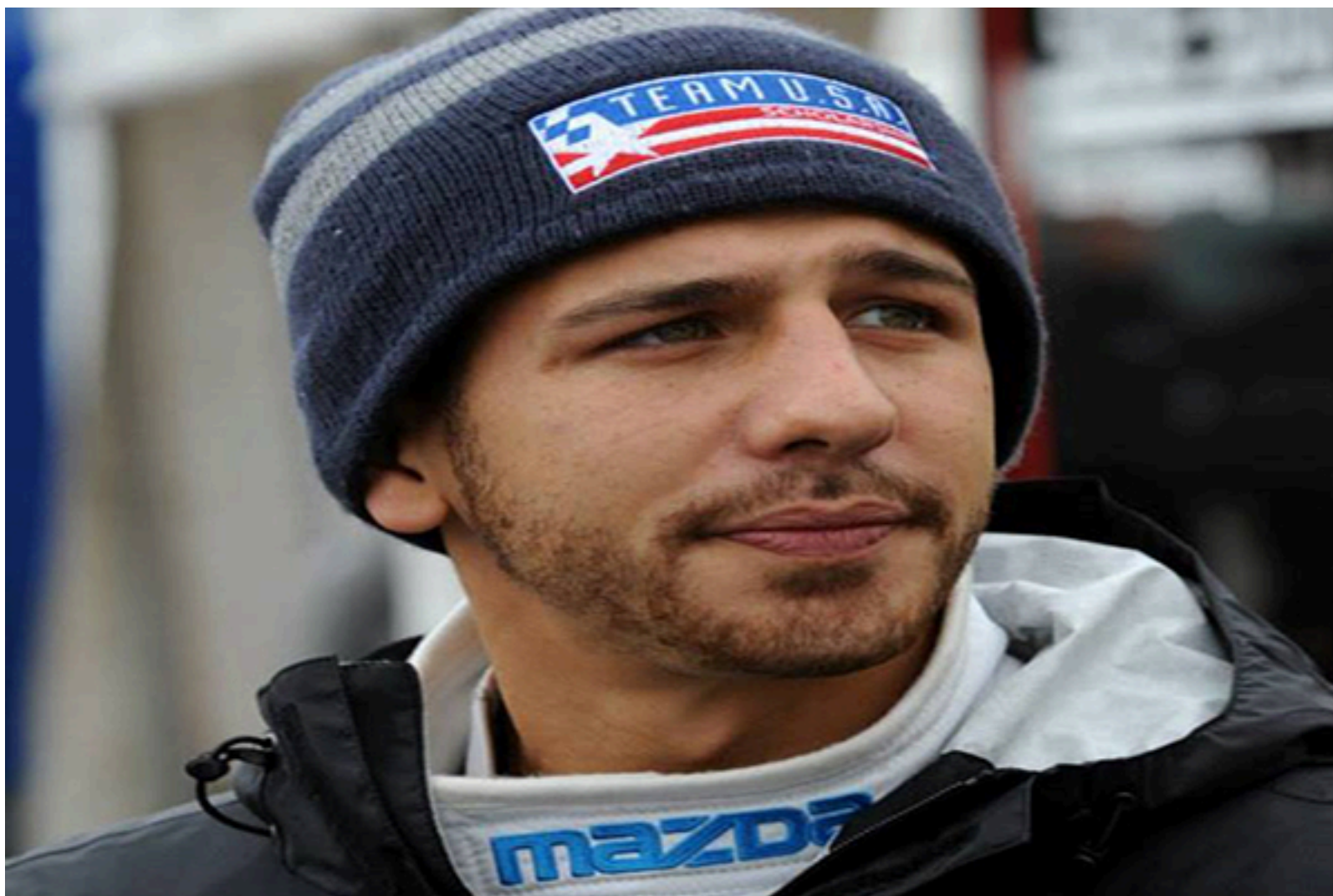
WEEKLY BULLETIN



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## MEET THE CONTENDER: MICHAEL STEPHENS

While many top race car drivers start in karting, some of the most talented in the world have not.



Michael Stephens is a first generation racing driver, 23 years old, and majored in Industrial Design at Arizona State University. This resume fits many fairly well. For those with a similar background and aspire to be a professional driver, the challenges are, largely, how to get the start in the sport and how to keep in the game long enough to make something of it. Have we got a story for you.

Stephens is a testament of one setting racing goals, a plan to achieve them, then working the plan (which is where we see many fall short, unfortunately), and finally persevering through the tough times (almost all fall off here, as this portion doesn't get easier). Considered by many the poster child for accomplishing all of this in light of the obstacles (i.e. little knowledge, funds, and contacts entering the industry), Stephens will have once again have to prove his fortitude and determination to make his dream come true.

While recently competing for [Team USA](#) in England, Stephens broke his thumb. He underwent surgery yesterday, November 6, just two days before the Mazda Road to 24 Shootout (MRT24), for which he had earned one of the nine finalist positions. As a result, he will not be able to compete in the MRT24 Shootout this year.

If you want to root on a true competitor, let us tell you a bit more about Stephens.

Stephens attended the Skip Barber Racing School in 2013. After taking a three-day racing class and

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two-day advanced racing class, he was invited to its scholarship shootout, known as the 2013 IndyCar Academy Shootout. Taking top honors, he was awarded a full-paid season in Skip Barber's 2014 Formula Summer Race Series. In the seven of eight scheduled double-race weekends he competed, he took home six race wins, nine poles, and ten podiums -clearly, a quick study.



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In 2014, he was selected to represent one of two Team USA drivers in England in the Formula Ford Festival and Walter Hayes Trophy races; Stephens took 3rd place at the latter event in Silverstone. After this coveted experience, Stephens competed in Skip Barber's 2014 Championship Shootout. After three days of competition and five total races, he earned the highest instructor/interview evaluation and 2nd highest business plan evaluation, placing him at the top of the points standings (170.8 to second place of 169.6). After the competitors dropped their lowest finishing position from the five races (per the rules), he lost by 1.8 points (144.6 to 142.8).

In 2015, Stephens ran the 2015 USf2000 Cooper Tires Winterfest and a one-off F1600 weekend within the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA). He concluded both events with top ten finishes as his growth continued. After being chosen once more to represent Team USA in 2015, Stephens competed against some of the best talent the open-wheel racing world has to offer.

While his quick succession as one of the most talented young American race drivers caught Mazda's eye, it was his off-track networking, perseverance, and value creation for companies that has kept him behind the wheel when his personal funds could not. For this on- and off-track balance, Mazda invited him to its MRT24 Shootout. Mazda will once again keep an eye on Michai and his off-track work, in particular, after he perseveres through his surgery.



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