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Strong Late Drive Propels Hotchkis to F Production Championship

By Al Craighead

LEXINGTON, Ohio (Sept. 25, 2005) – Mark Hotchkis, of Manhattan Beach, Calif., captured his first National Championship Sunday, taking the F Production class win at the 2005 SCCA National Championship Runoffs® Presented by Kohler at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course. Steve Sargis, of Frankfort, Ill., and Mason Workman, of Reynoldsburg, Ohio, completed the top-three.

Hotchkis Celebrates First F Production Championship

Starting from the pole position, John Saurino controlled the start, leading Sargis, and Craig Chima around the opening lap. Racing in close formation, Hotchkis and Workman joined the fight for the lead at the start of lap two. Going three-wide into the esses, Hotchkis passed Sargis and got to the inside of Saurino. Battling for the lead, Saurino went off-course followed by Chima, as Hotchkis and Sargis continued without incident. Holding off repeated challenges for the lead from Sargis, Hotchkis led laps three through eight, when a full-course caution was displayed for a spectacular incident involving Paul Shipp. Timing the lap 12 restart to perfection, Hotchkis easily maintained the lead, with no passes for position within the top-five. As Hotchkis steadily increased his lead during the closing stages of the 20-lap race, Flescher and Workman became engaged in a great battle for third place. Entering the keyhole turn on the final lap, the duo touched. Flescher spun off-course, losing several positions, while Workman continued in third place. Leading uncontested to the checkered flag, Hotchkis crossed the start/finish 6.265 seconds ahead of Sargis, winning his first National Championship.

"At the start I stayed outside going into the first turn, tucked in behind Steve to be safe and followed him through," said Hotchkis. "I got by him but never got away from him. I was driving too hard before the full course yellow but calmed down during it and was better after. This car is Robert Kirby's car. He drove it here many times. In April he passed away. His family asked me to continue to drive it this year. David Finch and his Raetech crew really prepared the car well for me this week and it was just great. The Kirby family and all the Raetech people are here so I did feel some pressure to perform."

Saurino, of Tulsa, Okla., finished fourth, and Pratt Cole, of Salt Lake City, Utah, completed the top-five.

No. 82 Gary Johnson wins the Sunoco Hard Charger Award for advancing 25 positions, to finish 14th after starting 38th.

Now in its 42nd year, the SCCA National Championship Runoffs annually crown the best amateur road racers in North America as Champions. More than 750 competitors have gathered this year to battle for

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