

ROAD & TRACK

10 TOP

FORMULA 1 DRIVERS

The might see

BY SA

Waiting for the next American champion

Do the math and you'll find that of the 22 drivers who competed in the 2008 Formula 1 championship, not a single one was an American. Scott Speed, booted off Scuderia Toro Rosso two years ago, was the last Yank in Formula 1, which despite billing itself as international, continues to be the domain of non-Americans. Sadly, that's not about to change right away. But there's hope for the future if one or more members of a talented trio of young Americans currently climbing their way up MazdaSpeed's racing ladder finally dip their toes in the FI waters. As champions of various Mazda-backed series, all profess to have FI aspirations. But who'll get there first? Some would say either Conor Daly or Josef Newgarden, two American teens who earned the respect of the global racing community by beating the Brits and Europeans at their own game—the take-no-prisoners

world of British Formula Ford racing. Daly, winner of the 2008 Skip Barber National championship and son of veteran FI and sports car racer and TV broadcaster Derek Daly, was just 16 when he became the youngest driver ever to win the Walter Hayes Trophy Formula Ford race at Silverstone last November. Two weeks earlier, Newgarden, runner-up to Daly in the Skip Barber National, set the pace for the Yanks by winning the Formula Ford Festival Final at Brands Hatch.

Daly, whose Skip Barber win earned him a factory-backed ride in the 2009 Star Mazda Championship, has signed with Anderson Racing, 2008's top team.

Taking a more direct approach, Newgarden is moving to last December testing with three British Formula Ford Duratec Series teams, where he spent part of last year hoping to choose the best team to drive for in the 2009 championship. While there, Newgarden tested a Formula Palmer Audi racer, although he says he's committed to competing in Formula Ford.

After winning the 2008 Star

Mazda Championship, 18-year-old John Edwards will head back to Formula Atlantic for a paid ride with championship-winning Newman-Wachs Racing. Edwards took an unsuccessful stab at the Atlantic championship in 2007 following two lackluster seasons in Formula Renault. But when he started racing Renaults he was only 14, the youngest driver in history to hold an FIA license, and a bit lacking in experience. Now, four years later, he's considered the most seasoned of the trio, all of whom have raced extensively in North America.

These three teens—and Alexander Rossi, who won the Formula BMW world final in Mexico City—are not the first Americans to reach for international racing's gold ring, and a quick scroll through the list of hopeful drivers who have preceded them underscores the difficulty of reaching Formula 1, much less succeeding at the game. All of the Americans who tried to make it to FI in recent years are now racing in other series. But now the young talent pool seems a little deeper. And perhaps a bit more determined to succeed. —Joe Rusz



Massa as my driver Champion Lewis my mind's eye he Massa's Ferrari. ve seasons, but spent most of ionship battle ial pressures e end of a out, that's and start a mind- ntinctive

n felt ing that his oately with him— more intense because each might easily have gambled on someone else. McLaren lost the 2007 championship when Hamilton came apart in the last two races, yet they stuck with him and got rid of two-time World Champion Fernando Alonso, his battle-tested teammate. Ferrari went through two-thirds of the season giving equal treatment to Massa and reigning World Champion Kimi Räikkönen, whom they were paying \$2 million a race. But as the season's climax loomed, they chose