

# NEW SMYRNA SPEEDWAY

## Zehr's home at one time

**SAMSULA, Fla. (February 12, 2007)** – Dalton Zehr is one of the upper Midwest's most successful pavement Late Model drivers of the past 15 years. His honors include championships in the ASA Midwest Tour and TUNDRA Super Late Model Series; he's TUNDRA's all-time leading race winner.

Zehr now has a home in Verona, Wis., but in official rundowns his name is sometimes still followed by Port Orange, Fla. Much of his formative time in short-track racing were in the Sunshine State and specifically New Smyrna Speedway. His first and only victory in the World Series of Asphalt Stock Car Racing came 19 years ago today at the historic half-mile.

His father Marty Zehr raced in the 1990s around his hometown of Middleton, Idaho. Work brought him to Florida in 2000, first for a few months at a time and soon for the long term. The elder Zehr competed a number of times in the next few years, albeit without much success.

Dalton was 9 at the time of the first relocation. He and his younger brother raced bandolero cars at Orlando Speedworld, then Dalton stayed with it and ran in Florida's popular truck division in his early teenage years. When 2005 rolled around, the then-14-year-old Zehr could run a Super Late Model.

"We bought two Late Models from the Skinner boys, Jamie and Dustin," he said. "I think my dad spent \$25,000 on two turn-key cars, an old Hamke and an old Howe. That Hamke was a pretty good car. We ran New Smyrna and Orlando a lot. In my first Speedweeks, all I did was ride around in the back and not



T.J. Harron Photography

**Dalton Zehr (left)** is entering his 10th season of racing with car owner and teammate John Beale (right).



run into anyone ... stayed out of the wrecks."

In 2007 New Smyrna brought Pro Late Models into its February fold. On the third night of action for the crate-engine class, Zehr came out on top, edging a couple of development drivers from teams such as Tim Russell Inc.

"The day that we won was two nights after wrecking going around a lapped car. I stuffed it in the wall," he said. "I went home and thought we were gonna bring our other car out, but we ended up putting it back together that night. There was a night off between races for Pros while the sprint cars ran. That was the coldest I've ever been at a racetrack, watching sprint cars at New Smyrna; they push a big wall of wind. When it's cold in Florida, it's wet and cold, and it's the humidity in the air getting you."

This Pro car, a new Lefthander, was also the first week for Zehr campaigning the #119 with which he has been identified most often for 19 years. That off-season he first came in contact with Gene Coleman, a longtime upper Midwest racer who operates Coleman Racing Products in Menominee Falls, Mich.

That agreement soon meant more than a sponsorship and a number change from the #05 on his first Supers. Zehr spent a few months in each of the next few years working at the Coleman home base, living in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and racing a number of times especially at Norway Speedway. He finished his high school degree online and continued on his mechanical career journey.

"I'd still come home for a month or two, but those mainly became visiting trips," Zehr said about Florida. "Twenty years ago I was going to try NASCAR racing, but I never did. Mark Martin had moved into the house next to us, and he decided to get a bando for his son Matt ... and we didn't want to get between them. I always had a passion for racing, and knew I was going to continue racing regardless of my path. For the fact that I get to do it as a job today ... I'm incredibly fortunate."

That path took him away from Coleman on a full-time basis in 2017. John Beale, a Madison-based businessman who threw his hat in the Late Model ring a

few years earlier, had gone his separate way from his first team leader, Wisconsin short-track standout Casey Johnson. Zehr joined the camp of the #5 group, sponsored by Gildan American Apparel and First Business Bank. Beale has reeled off his own string of victories behind the wheel with Zehr as his crew chief, and Zehr has also added to his long list of accolades in events where Beale hasn't driven.

"We're still working on our schedule," Zehr said about Beale Racing's 2026 plans. "We know some special events we'll go run and see what doesn't overlap. We're also waiting on everyone's rulebooks to come out. This year we're also going road racing with a Rush SR car, like the equivalent of a Ford spec. When I lived in Florida I drove a Shelby Can-Am car at Daytona, Sebring and Road Atlanta."

Zehr still talks often with his dad and two siblings, but the only family to see him race regularly is his young son Maverick. Marty now lives in Nebraska.

"It's for work again, but I think there's some gypsy blood in my family," Dalton added. "We can't stay in one place for very long."

**Night #4 Pro Late Models:** 1. Dalton Zehr; 2. Jonathan Beason; 3. Tyler Townsend; 4. Keaton Feller; 5. Will Thomas; 6. Rusty Ebersole; 7. Danny O'Quinn Jr.; 8. Nick Glaze; 9. Cole Pearn; 10. Jimmy Weller III; 11. Dustin Dunn; 12. Charles Devine; 13. Kyle Eastham; 14. Charlie Rose; 15. Dave Russell.



T.J. Harron Photography

**Dalton Zehr** should have a chance to run a road course for the first time in almost 20 years in this machine from Rush Auto Works.

LMD file

**Dalton Zehr won one feature and placed second in Pro Late Model points in the 2007 edition of the World Series of Asphalt Stock Car Racing at New Smyrna Speedway.**