



Peak continued for Canadians

OXFORD, Maine (July 16, 1995) — Each year a few Canadian drivers bring their Super Late Models to Oxford Plains Speedway to compete in one of short-track racing's true pinnacle events. Nowadays the majority of those Canadians are from the Maritime provinces; New Brunswick is just across the border from Maine, and 2022-23 Oxford 250 winner Cole Butcher hails from Nova Scotia.

A generation ago there were more drivers from Ontario in the 250. The only three Ontario racers to win the event are all in the Canadian Motorsport Hall of Fame, and they pulled off their triumphs in consecutive years.

Junior Hanley pulled off the feat in 1993, then Derek Lynch did it one year later. Wrapping up that Maple Leaf streak was Dave Whitlock, who won the event 31 years ago today. Ironically Whitlock piloted a car that was purchased from Hanley.

"I raced with him for four or five years in ACT," Whitlock said about the ACT Pro Stock Tour, which ended in 1996. "He always had nice equipment, and he was pretty fast as well."

This 250 triumph was his third attempt in the event, and the first two didn't go so well, although he did make the feature which has always been an accomplishment. In 1995 he put together a more concerted effort to prepare for the 250.

"We went to Oxford for a couple of races that year before the 250, testing and tuning the race car. We had set our sights on trying to win it," Whitlock said. "When we got there, we had quite a bullet that day. Near the end of the race, just a few laps before the white flag, I could see Hanley in my front window. I thought if I could get to him and pass him, it'd be pretty special. We didn't quite get that done and he stayed on the lead lap (he finished fifth). And I remember him coming over to tech when they checked the motor; Junior leaned on the fender for four or five minutes watching them and said, 'Good job, boys,' and then walked away."

It wasn't long after this triumph that Whitlock walked away from Late Model racing, at least in the States. The CASCAR Super Series was growing, and he became one of the faces of his national stock car circuit, winning 11 times from 2001-06. He had already scored the 1991 championship in CASCAR East, his first major honor in the form of racing where the cars are more like ARCA machines than Late Models.



Ken Squier interviews Dave Whitlock during a 1990s race at Thunder Road International Speedbowl. Whitlock drove a Ford Quality Care-sponsored #92 entry to a victory in the Oxford 250 at Oxford Plains Speedway in Maine, 31 years ago today. He also won the Milk Bowl at Thunder Road later in 1995.

Thunder Road archives

"I ran a race at Kawartha Speedway in a McColl house car, and won that race," he said about Ontario's top chassis builder. "We ran a couple more races with them, but that was about it for Late Models. CASCAR was the biggest series up here."

Whitlock hung up his helmet after 2009, which was a planned move even after he won that season opener for the then-NASCAR Canadian Tire Series. A few years earlier he began showing symptoms of Parkinson's disease, with which he lives today at age 60.

Since that retirement he has attended several Late Model races near home plus some NASCAR weekends in the States. One younger short-track driver has caught his interest for making his home province's racing community proud.

"I like following Scott Steckly's boy Kyle," Whitlock said about the winner of two ASA STARS Na-

tional Tour races since 2024, plus more than a dozen major Late Model shows in Canada this decade. "I raced against his dad for a lot of years. We had three girls, but they haven't taken interest as far as trying to do any racing. Now we have nine grandchildren including seven boys, so I'm thinking one of them might have the itch to do it."

True Value Oxford 250: 1. Dave Whitlock; 2. Jeff Taylor; 3. Tracy Gordon; 4. Scott Fraser; 5. Junior Hanley; 6. Brad Leighton; 7. Dave Dion; 8. Ralph Nason; 9. Stan Meserve; 10. Dave Pinkham; 11. Mike Rowe; 12. Bruce Haley; 13. Pete Rondeau; 14. Tim Brackett; 15. Jon Lizotte; 16. Dennis Demers; 17. Dick Belisle; 18. Gary Smith; 19. Kenny Wright; 20. Jim McCallum; 21. Glen Luce; 22. Bob Gerry; 23. Gary Bellefleur Jr.; 24. Kip Stockwell; 25. Steve Nelson; 26. Glenn Martel; 27. Dana Staples; 28. Rollie MacDonald; 29. Yvon Bedard; 30. Bub Bilodeau; 31. Donald Theetge; 32. Paul Richardson; 33. Claude Leclerc; 34. Roger Laperle; 35. Glenn Cusack; 36. Derek Lynch; 37. Dale Shaw; 38. Tommy Rowe; 39. Alan McClure; 40. Kerry Anderson; 41. Gary Drew; 42. Larry Gelinas.