

Electric connection: Atwell prospers

At the start of this year, Michael Atwell opened his own office as a financial advisor. He enjoyed some pretty good numbers on his own ledger in 2025.

The UARA National Super Late Model points reflect the prize money earned in sanctioned races during the season. Atwell, from Naples, Fla., topped that list with a total of \$47,750. The biggest deposits came after the Rattler 250 in March at South Alabama Speedway (\$25,000, and he practically led from flag to flag) and in October at Mobile International Speedway.



Kevin Peters

Michael Atwell competed as far away as Wenatchee, Wash., during a year where he won the UARA National championship.



Kevtron Media

Michael Atwell, shown on the racing surface at Berlin Raceway in Marne, Mich., converted two UARA National victories and two more podium finishes into a championship in the Super Late Model circuit.

Both victories came at racetracks where he had only previously competed twice.

"Mobile ... I love that place. Some tracks we've won at I'm not a big fan of, but that place is fast and it's fun," he said. "And I love the Rattler. I didn't realize the significance of that at first – obviously when you're in the car, you're not thinking about it – but there are not very many weekends that go the way that one did."

There aren't very many arrangements in pavement Late Model racing which have worked out the way Atwell's has. In 2021 Atwell, one of the proteges of nationally-known driver and setup man Mike Garvey, came out to the Summer Showdown at Evergreen Speedway as a crewman for Chris Davidson, with whom Garvey has worked the longest. Atwell returned to the #14 crew several more times over the next year and a half.

Then for a few times in 2023, and then for the full UARA National schedule in 2024-25, Atwell was installed as the driver of the #14 with Davidson Electric as the largest backer. There were some growing pains at first, with only one podium finish in their first year together, but things came together nicely last season.

"It has definitely worked out better than I could've imagined," Atwell said. "Everyone's all on the same page, and that makes it easier at the track, even if it's a stressful weekend."

For the previous few years, Davidson had been on a bucket-list journey of his own, traveling from Pearland, Texas, to far-off destinations such as Kern Raceway in California and Berlin Raceway in Michigan. Then he has remained on such a path with Atwell's name over his car, a Senneker Performance chassis with Peters power and additional backing from Drake Ready Mix, Rocket Fabrication & Suspension, Tricor Carpentry and Painstaking Art Tattoo Parlour.

There have been some logistical challenges. Most of the time Atwell will fly from Fort Myers to Atlanta and then to whichever destination the schedule brings; the two Berlin shows were the only UARA races north of Georgia in 2025. But last year one of the Berlin races came just a few days after a curiosity trip to Wenatchee Valley Super Oval in Washington - and a pole start but a DNF.

"When Wenatchee got done racing, we left from the track. Me and John (Claridge, Davidson's full-time crewman) drove the hauler," Atwell said. "We had 36 hours on the road and we had 48 to get there, so we went back and forth in 10-hour shifts."

Atwell and Davidson have Wenatchee on their schedule again this year, plus the famed Slinger Nationals in Wisconsin and the UARA shows. The 26-year-old driver also has a deal to run a handful of races in the Midwest, driving for Illinois carpenter and fellow Garvey client Jim Weber.

Tennessee

Winning with Day, learning with Wilson

Wayne Day's racing operation, his Late Model team and the Day Racing Enterprises parts distribution business, are somewhat self-contained. The #29 Super and Pro Late Models, driven for the last six years by Hunter Wright, are built in-house at Day's home base in Goodlettsville, Tenn. They also perform the engine service in their own facility. And unlike many race teams in the Nashville area who are customers of WAR Shocks, Day and his staff assemble their own as well.

They certainly aren't shutting out any outside influences. For more than a year Wright has had a chance to learn from one of the top nationwide short-track groups, Donnie Wilson Motorsports. On more than a dozen occasions in 2025, he traveled with or met Wilson crew chiefs and team manager Bond Suss to work on crews for the Oklahoma car owner's driver development team, with star Late Model racers such as Cole Butcher, Gavan Boschele, George Phillips and Jade Avedisian. Most of the times he was called upon for service were at Southeastern races, but he did get to be in the pits for the Slinger Nationals in Wisconsin.

That also meant a larger cheering section when Wright succeeded in his own driving pursuits. The first cheer came at New Smyrna Speedway last February, as Wright captured the Florida Speedweeks points title for Pro Late Models. This was his second straight World Series crown, but in 2025 he tripled his Sunshine State victory total.

Things went as nicely in his home area. Wright enjoyed a healthy advantage atop the standings at Nashville Fairgrounds Speedway, scoring his first Pro championship at the historic facility and earning his most prized guitar.

"We had a really good year," said Wright, from Gladeville, Tenn. "I wish we would've been able to close out more races; there were probably three that we lost leading with two to go and had something get us on a restart. But we ran 15 races, and we were first or second 12 times."

Wright was also never lower than fifth in any rundown; that valley came on the second night at New Smyrna, be-



Jeff Ames

Hunter Wright celebrates his May victory at Nashville Fairgrounds Speedway with two of his sponsors, Jeffrey Roy (left) and Aaron Lane.

tween victories in short sprint races where inversions play a huge part. His 2025 campaign also included two trips to Montgomery Motor Speedway, winning once and placing third once.

Day's still in charge, and there are crew members on the #29 who likely know more about setup than Wright. But he could still apply elements from Wilson, Suss, Dennis Dean and other

head wrenches to how his team competed at home.

"The biggest thing is organizationally, as far as help goes," Wright said. "I saw more efficient ways to do certain things, and better processes in going through and getting the cars ready, and maybe even some better adjustments to make vs. what I used to do to get a certain feel. The setup stuff goes quite a bit differently - we build our own chassis and they run Hamkes - but probably not really that much. I've been to their shop (in Mooresville, N.C.) once or twice."

There was an exception to the top-five streak for Wright, whose Late Model effort is also sponsored by CertainTeed, Tennessee 811, Quality Glass, Bass Tire and Roy's Meat Service. He did run three races for MAN Motorsports in the ARCA Menards Series East, with one third-place finish at Nashville and ninths at stops in Pensacola and Indianapolis.

Among his 2026 slate of Pro races and other track visits, Wright wants to get back into Super Late Model racing. The Day Enterprises group has a Super and they'll be doing double duty this February at New Smyrna.

"I'd like to win a Super race or two," he said.



Jason Reasin Photography

Hunter Wright began his 2025 campaign with three wins and a Pro Late Model points title at Florida Speedweeks. It continued going well, as shown by his championship at the historic .596-mile oval in Nashville, Tenn.

Summer winning streak boosts Sargent

Randy Sargent's hometown bullring was Rockford Speedway, the historic high-banked .29-mile oval which closed after the 2023 season. His father Tim Sargent was known for his success at Rockford, including a five-win track championship season in 2010, but the touch around that place wasn't hereditary.

The now-29-year-old Sargent won only once in a Late Model at Rockford, although he only ran a full season once there. He took a quicker liking to some of the larger oval tracks in the upper Midwest.

That proficiency showed in his 2025 championship campaign in the Big 8 Limited Late Model Series. All three of his victories in the tour came at half-mile ovals, Madison International Speedway and twice at Hawkeye Downs Speedway.

"I like my advantage at the half-miles," he said. "I'm bad at the really small tracks. I struggled at Rockford quite a bit. That was definitely a different bullring there."



Randy Sargent (11) battles veteran Bobby Wilberg at Madison International Speedway in Oregon, Wis. Madison was the site of the first of Sargent's three 2025 victories in the Big 8 Limited Late Model Series.

Kim Kemperman



team photo

Randy Sargent, shown with his father Tim (right), captured the Big 8 championship in his fifth year of following the circuit.

The big-track belief began in earnest at the 2024 edition of Oktoberfest at La-Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway. After seven previous podium finishes in Big 8, Sargent dominated the 'Fest feature, and that momentum seemed to carry over into his tour fortunes in 2025.

"I felt like that helped a lot," Sargent said. "Running Speedweeks helped too; even though it was a different car, it gets the beginning of your year going. That kept me on my toes for sure. It was my first time racing there (at New Smyrna last February), but my dad raced there (in four editions of Speedweeks from 2014-19)."

Sargent's fortunes in other rides – the Pro Late Model from Florida and his Super Late Model which he raced at Dells Raceway Park a few times – didn't quite match what he pulled off in his Big 8 ride, or even in the 602 crate Late Model he won in at the Dells earlier this decade. The #11 Limited – in which he amassed seven podium finishes in nine races and no result worse than sixth – was a Hamke Race Car with a clip from Clattenburg Racing Fabrication. New Grundy County Speedway Limited

champion Franc Beldowski has the same chassis makeup; Beldowski occasionally enjoyed advice from the Sargent family in addition to Steve Rubeck.

That Limited was the only car in the 29-year-old Sargent's arsenal which he didn't really touch in the last off-season. The strategy might be the same this winter, because in 2026 he wants to focus more on his Super Late Model, a full CRF chassis.

"We're just starting on Supers. My dad never ran a Super; a Pro Late Model down south is as close as he has been," said Sargent, supported by XL Contracting, Pietro's Pizzeria, TS Heating & Cooling, Frisch Signs & Designs, Hammerhead Construction & Remodeling, Tiry's Race Engines, Crazy Times Pub & Grub, Hair by Schmall, Palmer's Repair & Fab, Boundaries Bar & Grill, Wilwood and QuarterMaster. "I wanna win something in one of those before I'm done. We'll run a handful of Big 8 races; the Hawkeye ones we kinda have to, and maybe Madison and LaCrosse. The Super we'll stay close to home, although maybe the Bill Bigley race (in November at Bradenton, Fla.)."

Atop the Mountain: Dad enjoys tour title

Ryan Phipps, the owner of an energy industry construction company called Western Mountain Inc., has three sons who are in various support classes of short-track racing based near Burley, Idaho. Beau is past school age and races legends cars, Jhett just turned 12 and plans to give that scaled-down division a try this season, and the youngest, Kyro, has done very well in bandoleros.

The primary goal in racing for the now-54-year-old Phipps is to set an example for his boys. And now, next to whatever trophies they have won or might collect in the future, will sit one large piece of hardware from their old man: one indicating the championship in the Northwest Super Late Model Series presented by Knottical Marine.

"I've been a fan, and it was a lifelong dream to do it," Phipps said. "The reason I started so late was that I was building my business. I have amazing people that work for the company. Now we have offices in Pennsylvania and Houston."

Phipps has also had amazing mentors in his time in Super Late Models. Fellow Gem State resident Trevor Cristiani was his first teacher, and he also learned from Preston Peltier for a bit. Now he is back with Cristiani, while his middle son has learned from legends car ace and former Late Model driver Peyton Saxton in Las Vegas.

"Both of them are amazing, and I couldn't be happier," Phipps said about Cristiani and Peltier. "Trevor's helped the boys out quite a bit, and we're only about two hours apart, so it works out pretty good. I just do it for the fun, and to have a platform for the boys."

For 12 weekends, plus the World Series of Asphalt Stock Car Racing week in February, the 2025 focus was on his pursuits in full-sized machines. Phipps has a Super Late Model from Fury Race Cars and a Hamke chassis set up for Pro Late Model action. In the seven NWSLMS events, he ran his Pro car with Supers in the bookending races at Tri-City Raceway, including a strong fifth-place effort in the Apple Cup in April with a 604 engine freshened by Phil Harper. For most of his other starts, including the Chilly Willy weekend at Tucson Speedway, he was in his Super with Peters power.

"If the caution flags fall right in the Apple Cup or the Fall Classic, a crate motor will do you good," said Phipps, who usually carried the logos of Western Mountain clients such as Project Mutual Telephone on his car.

In with the good, such as his season-best third-place finish at his home track, Magic Valley Speedway, came a few lumps the #5 group had to take. His first outing in the Spears CARS Tour West didn't go well, and his other DNF came in the next-to-last NWSLMS race



Sandi Allen/Bent Wheel Backyard Racing

Ryan Phipps won the Northwest Super Late Model Series championship in his first, and likely only, full season in the tour.



Sandi Allen/Bent Wheel Backyard Racing

Ryan Phipps is shown with his sons Jhett (right) and Kyro, his lead adviser Trevor Cristiani (back right), and crew members Chris Ordner (left) and Cole Brown.

at Wenatchee Valley Super Oval. A mechanical problem also made him the first dropout in the main event of the 2026 Chilly Willy show.

But none of those downers were all that depressing or damaging. He also had chances to join one of his sons in some legends racing action.

"My Late Model stuff will be scaled back some because of the boys," Phipps

said. "I enjoy every freaking dollar I spend in it."

The younger Phipps generation is following the trend of racers starting at early ages. The WMI boss didn't even don a helmet until he was almost 50 years old.

"All these guys would've been in trouble if I had started earlier," he added.

Deshaies overcomes a summer bummer

The most important times of Devin Deshaies' Late Model championship run at New London-Waterford Speedbowl last season were in the spring. He captured his first feature win in the division in May and backed it up again in June.

Those triumphs and his other consistent performances allowed him to build up a points lead large enough to where one bad evening didn't cost him too much.

"In midseason we kinda junked the car and had to put a front clip on it," said Deshaies, from Oakland, R.I. "We came back better than before. It was just a good experience all the way through."

He didn't win again in the last two months of the Speedbowl campaign, but the steadiness returned. And he and his family and friends were able to reclip the car themselves; since that #64 has been in their shop in 2023, the Deshaies group has not had to return the car to the chassis builder formerly known as Crazy Horse Racing, now under the



Devin Deshaies makes laps around the half-mile oval in Waterford, Conn. He won twice and finished with an 11-point gap atop the Late Model standings.

KB Photography

Port City Racecars umbrella.

"There was a scare the week after the crash," Deshaies said. "I was P-5 just riding and seeing where I was, and a big crash happened in front of me. I was in

the middle of a three-wide and a car stopped in the middle of the track. I slowed down and the guy behind me pushed me into the pile, but there wasn't that much damage; the nose was

just ripped off a little bit."

The learning experiences were strong before and after the Waterford season for the 18-year-old Deshaies, sponsored by Jeremy's Propane, Level 5 Interiors, PD Designs, Tire Doctor, Pellegrini Electric, Ocean State Weatherization, Barington Automotive, DDM Siding & Roofing, and property management company Skaket. In April he tried out New Hampshire Motor Speedway - Waterford cars are American-Canadian Tour-legal - and he completed every lap. He did the same in October at Seekonk Speedway, where he finished eighth against a field where five drivers were sent home after the B-main.

He may not be able to do anything with the Seekonk momentum for a while. The Late Model program might be on hold for all of 2026, as his father Jon Deshaies is planning to build a new house and they've sold one of the two #64 Late Models. But Devin does have a solid ride with a legends car team owner to keep his driving skills sharp.

Healing, racing: Humphrey tops points

Two and a half decades after Tracie Bellerose became the first woman to win a Late Model championship at the home base of the American-Canadian Tour, another young lady pulled off the feat at another quarter-mile which runs ACT-legal cars in its headline division.

Brenna Humphrey topped the points at Riverside Speedway. Other ladies have worn crowns from support classes at "Grovetona," but the 24-year-old from Stewartstown, N.H., is the first in a Late Model, on the strength of one feature victory and more steady performances.

"It had exceeded my expectations of the year, although more wins would've been nice," she said. "My goals for the season were to get comfortable in the new car, be consistent and improve each race."

The #3 Dale Shaw Race Car was the first full Shaw machine in the Humphrey shop and was acquired after 2024. She also focused on Riverside, which has been the usual plan for the team called Downforce Motorsports. The last time behind the wheel at other New England facilities was in 2022 for the owner of Healing Bee Massage Therapy.

That target is also in place for this season, although there's a May 31 ACT date at Riverside which is in the sights of the driver supported by L.J. Shaw Racing, R.N. Craft, Ranger Pest Services, Henry's Concrete Construction, B&G Construction & Excavation, Burnell Pest Services, New England Concrete Foundations, and Puzzled Racing for Autism Awareness. The series, now sponsored by Milton Caterpillar, hasn't visited the track since 2020.



Smokin' Shutters Photography
Brenna Humphrey, shown with his mother Stephanie (left) and sister Brittany, celebrates an ACT-rules Late Model championship at Riverside Speedway and Adventure Park in Groveton, N.H.

Canada

Learning from Lonnie: Maritime champ

Clark Moore scored his first two Pro Stock victories and captured the division championship at Speedway 660 near Geary, New Brunswick. But Moore's most exciting racing moment of 2025 might have come when he was in street clothes and wearing a headset.

Moore is the spotter for Lonnie Sommerville, the Maritime veteran who has followed the Easy-Kleen Super Late Model Series since it formed in 2023. This SLMS effort is the 50-year-old Sommerville's first full-schedule driving stint in many years, and he captured his first special-event win in more than a decade last July at 660.

"He hadn't won anywhere in a very long time," said Moore, from St. John, N.B. "Obviously it was a big race. His parents were there to see it. It was great having everybody in victory lane; some of them are getting up there in age too."

In recent years Sommerville has been a mentor more than a driver. One of his top students has been Moore, who moved up from the sportsman ranks after Covid was clear. He endured three winless years at the quarter-mile, but the lessons learned set in nicely for the 2025 season, especially on his newly-acquired Hamke Race Car.

"It was from the Rowdy time there," Moore said. "Dylan Gosbee won the (first SLMS title) in 2023, then they sold that car. We made some changes to it to get it back to how I wanted it, and Lonnie worked on it."

The Moore and Sommerville families go back generations, both in racing and in life. There's home construction in the Moore family, and some in the Sommerville clan are involved in flooring.

"In the '90s, we used to go watch Lonnie race. He was our favorite guy to watch," the 30-year-old Moore said. "We used to go to Maine, to Beech Ridge and Oxford, and all through this part of Canada."

Most of those long trips to watch Sommerville came in signature events; he has three career victories in the Maritimes' various 250-lap extravaganzas. That's an area which Moore, sponsored by Kelson Industrial Group, AJW Mechanical, the Power Store and Lift Sales, hasn't yet mastered. His home track has a 250 every Labour Day weekend, but Moore hasn't placed better than 13th in four starts in that event. He also tried two SLMS races in 2023 but didn't finish either time.

Improvement there is at the top of the 2026 goals for the #54. The number was chosen to mirror Maine standout Johnny Clark, the car Kyle Busch drove in many then-NASCAR Xfinity Series races in recent years, and the fact that it rhymes with Moore. But some better outings in big shows would reflect things better as well.

"In those you're racing against guys who are better at managing their tires," he said. "I know how to be fast, probably, but not maintain it for a long period of time yet."



Grizzly Photography
Clark Moore won the Pro Stock crown at Speedway 660 near Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Call him Shirley, and call him champion

The 2025 season marked the third Pro Late Model championship for Matthew Shirley at his hometown facility, Sutherland Automotive Speed-

way in Saskatoon, Sask. It might have been his most disappointing one as well, although the positives far outweighed the negatives.



Kemmer Racing Photography
Matthew Shirley won his third Pro Late Model title and his fifth overall championship at the third-mile oval in Saskatchewan's largest city.

First off, the 30-year-old Shirley did not win a feature during the campaign. And the inroads he has made in the NASCAR Canada Series, which will lead to increased action in the country's national stock car circuit in 2026, will prevent him from defending his title at home.

"Dates will be conflicting for us to make any championship run at Sutherland Automotive," he said. "And there's no NASCAR race in Saskatoon, but there is going to be two points races at Edmonton International Raceway. That's business though, and it's out of our control. I wish the decision makers of the schedules and the tracks the best, as they are doing what they think is best."

Shirley hasn't finalized his schedule, but he has plenty of excitement for

both kinds of cars that he races. At home he had a newly-acquired machine for 2025, a Lefthander car with the logos of his employer Denray Tire, Provincial Vodka, Crush-It Hard Iced Tea, David's Lawn Care, Boss Plumbing, Saskatoon Custom Powder Coating, Back Country Welding, Sharp Auto Trim, FM-92.9 the Bull, Preferred Collision & Glass and Shirley's Service.

What he did at home was definitely an accomplishment. Four other full-time Saskatoon Pro Late Model racers were in a tight group with Shirley: multi-time track champion Jim Gaunt, four-time race winner Sam Howlett, new winner Shantel Kalika and veteran Jared Reddekopp. Shirley wound up atop the standings by six points or three race positions over Howlett.