

Delaware Speedway Season Preview

With the dawn of the 2010 Delaware Speedway season on the horizon; it's time to take one last look at who are going to be the drivers to watch at the London-area half-mile. Only time will tell who has done enough homework, and who will be able to race for one of the four prestigious titles at Canada's premiere short track.

Late Models

Championship contenders

For the past few seasons, Steve Robblee and Ron Sheridan have been able to separate themselves from the rest of the pack during the season long points battle, and I wouldn't expect 2010 to be much different. Both of the Delaware superstars will be back in their familiar rides. The pair finished one-two



so many times over the past several years it's not funny, and you should look for more of the same again this year. This season the duo will be two to watch, as Sheridan will try to do his best at closing up the number of championships that separate the two. Going into the season the score is Robblee – nine, Sheridan – none.

Darkhorses

There are a couple of other drivers that will contend for wins, and might even take a stab at the track championship, including Scott Lindsay, Mark Watson, and Jonathan Urlin.

Lindsay is a former multi-time Delaware Speedway champion, and is a large reason why half of St. Mary's populates the turn one area of the hill every Friday night. He'll be back in his familiar #20 again this season, but his program and results have fallen off slightly over the past couple of seasons. He needs to turn the fifth and sixth-place finishes into wins again in 2010 to have a stab at the crown.

While he ruffled the feathers of a few veterans last season with his aggressive driving style, about the only thing Watson didn't do in 2010 was win a feature. The former Open Wheel Modified champion was able to lay down a number of second-place runs, but also came back to the pits on the business end of the hook a few times as well. The talent and equipment are in place, and if Watson can mix his tremendous aggressiveness with a small dose of patience, he might be able to join the duo in the contender category.



Urlin is another driver that is looking to build on his 2009 success. The second generation Delaware Speedway pilot raced his way to third in the championship

standings including a feature win. The former Infinity Pro Series driver has steadily improved since he threw some fenders on his cars and started in stock cars, and could put up a championship challenge in 2010 with increased improvement.

Best of the rest

While Kirk 'The Joker' Hooker is a question mark to run the full season, the driver would move up the ladder to a darkhorse contender if he commits to running every show. He finally notched his first feature win at Delaware last July, and is the only driver to have wins in three of the highest profile events in Ontario Late Model racing, as he has won the Summer Sizzler at Kawartha, Octoberfest at Flamboro, and Autumn Colours at Peterborough. The only one missing from his resume is the Labour Day Delaware event, and he's also proved that he can points race as he is a former ALSTAR Series champion before the series folded.

Jamie Ramsay busted out with his first career feature win in June of 2009, and was able to race his way to an eighth-place finish in the standings last year. While his performance last year was much improved, his drop off at the end of the season still shows that he has a ways to go before he can be a legitimate championship threat.

Jay Doerr will be making his return to Delaware in 2010 after messing around on the dirt in Merrittville the last couple years, and a few starts in the Lucas Oil Sportsman Series. Doerr has raced a Late Model at Delaware before, and has been in victory lane, but has yet to be in contention for a championship as the season winds to a close.

Mat Box race his way towards the top-five a number of nights last year, and if he can just improve his performance a little more in 2010 - the long range forecast is for Box to move into 'The Darkhorse' category in the next year or two, as he continues to improve by leaps and bounds.

Jesse Kenney will be a part time player at Delaware this year, electing to run just the high profile events, so don't expect to see the veteran at the track until late June for the annual Canada Day event.

Super Stocks

Championship Contenders

Look for the two car championship battle from last season to become a three-car battle in 2010.



Defending champion Jason Lidster and Darrell 'Hollywood' Lake will be joined in the title chase by Steve Smith, as the former Enduro star starts his sophomore campaign on the heels of a fourth-place finish in the championship in 2009.

Darkhorses

There are a number of other drivers that could enter the championship picture, including Jeremy Reid who came on strong for a third-place finish in the points last year. Jeremiah Rabideau and Andrew Perkins could also sneak into championship contention this season, but Rabideau will have to equal his 2009 mid-season streak, and Perkins will have to get his rebuilt car that he wrecked last year back up to snuff, and quickly.

Best of the Rest

Look for the wily veterans Scott Nagy and Jim Maris to knock down their customary one feature win this season, and for continued improvements will be made from division young guns Stephen Richmond, Jake Ott, and Kris Lawrence, as they continue to get laps under their belts and move into championship contention in the future.

An Interesting Thought

The depth of the Super Stock division has become very deep, including a number of drivers that look like the future of stock car racing in Southern Ontario. When you group Ott, Lawrence and Richmond in with drivers like Lake, and Perkins, you could very easily be looking at some of the drivers that could be fighting for the Delaware Speedway Late Model championship in 2015 and beyond.

Demar Aggregates Trucks

Championship Contenders

This list could easily start and finish with Paul Fothergil. Fothergil is a multi-time champion and will be ready to race for another title in 2010, but despite Fothergil being the odds on favourite, the division is laden with talented drivers that will challenge Paul for the championship.

Jeff Showler was in title contention until halfway through the final feature of the season, and should be set to challenge again in 2010. The gains he made from 2008 are real, and he should be Fothergil's toughest foe, with McDonald racing part-time, and Demelo having moved on.



Darkhorses

Devon Bloemendal and Shawn Johns have both been through the title wringer before, and every experience like that puts a driver one step closer to gaining the elusive crown. Sure, maybe both of them could be moved up into the above category, but someone has to be a darkhorse, and these two have now been labelled.

The Best of the Rest

Tom Zagorodny, and Jordan Dupuis both came a long way in 2009, but to move into championship contention, they have to take their feature wins, and turn them into multiple feature wins.

Top sophomores of the division include Michelle Koricina, Michael Thompson and Lonnie Thompson. All three grew a tremendous amount as drivers in 2009 during the season and look for continued improvements from all three this season.

The Most Anticipated Points Battle of the Season

One of the best battles to watch all season will be the Rookie-of-the-Year race in the Truck division, as a host of new talent invades the division. Former Open Wheel Modified driver Steve McCaw will be behind the wheel of the truck that was driven to the divisions' owners' championship by Justin Demelo last year.



Also gracing the freshman class will be former Grand Bend Speedway drivers Shae Gemmell, and Matt Koricina, as well as Delaware Junior graduate Mickey Brydges. The battle should be a heated contest between the four, but look for McCaw's experience to give him a slight edge.

Powerade Open Wheel Modifieds

Championship Contenders

For several years the kings of the division have been Barry Newman and Jamie Cox (and Watson before he moved to a Late Model) as both have been able to win a large number of features and championship, but expect them to be joined in the championship race this year by Paul Shipway.



Shipway showed marked improvements last year as he stepped his consistency up to the same level as Cox and Newman, winning some features and finishing within legitimate striking distance of the top duo. If you take away his accident on the final night, he would have been right in the hunt.

The biggest wildcard in the whole equation could be the short schedule, as the Modified championship will be decided on less than 10 events. In the past, a racer could have an off

night or two, but with the shortened season, even one misstep could knock a driver out of contention.

Darkhorses

David McCullough rode his first career feature win to a fourth-place finish in the points standings last year, and could have an outside shot at a championship, but he will have to win a few more races in 2010, and run well every night to make that happen, including beating Cox and Newman on a consistent basis.

The Best of the Rest

Long-time division driver Darrell Limon is still looking for that elusive first feature win, and it could come in 2010, while sophomore Tyler Hendricks will be looking for his second and more this year. If things go his way, look for Hendricks to become a nightly threat, if not this year, than 2011 for sure. Stephen Richmond and John Saunders will also be very competitive.

Look for Justin Demelo to be fast right out of the box as he's the early favourite to capture the divisions' Rookie-of-the-Year title. The 2010 Truck champion moved up to a Late Model for the 300 on Labour Day weekend, and finished a strong seventh, proving his ability to adapt quickly to the slick tires like he will race on in the Modifieds.

Story by Jamie Maudsley

Photos by www.maudsleymotorsports.com

