



# Where did you go?

## Questions surround Weekend Warrior Series entering 2007

**S**ince its inception, the Weekend Warrior Series has prided itself in supporting the grassroots racing community by creating an identifiable brand for race teams. By providing a unified identity, efforts to promote the entire community were intended to elevate the status of local racing beyond what could be accomplished by investing in individual speedways or teams.

With substantial financial backing from Lucas Oil and the co-operation of many area speedways to work toward common rules, the future of local racing appeared to be very bright, indeed.

After an exciting points battle that was not decided until the final race of the 2005 season, the WWS had crowned its first champion and entered its sophomore season with hopes to build upon the success of its rookie campaign. However, the WWS entered its sophomore year without Mosport Speedway and ended the season on shaky ground with no title sponsor or points fund.

Until recently, the Weekend Warrior Series has been silent about its intentions for the 2007 season, and has left many wondering about their plans for the new year. Their March 1 announcement revealed a restructured points system and incentive-based funding provided by Gator Canada. However, at the time of the release, only Delaware and Flamboro Speedway have committed to the new-look WWS for 2007.

Although the future success of the WWS remains unclear, its founding principles remain as a guideline for area promoters to follow. But, is co-operation amongst track owners just a dream?

The rumour mills, as well as recent amendments to rule books across the province, reveal that competitors are actually further away from the goal of common specifications that are shared by everyone. Without a standard set of rules that is enforced at all tracks, the efforts by WWS management to create an identifiable brand for local, grassroots racing will be difficult to achieve.

Without question, Delaware and Kawartha Speedways have been leaders in the local Late Model scene. However, the geographic distance between these two speedways has resulted in strategic directions that are not aligned with each other.

In the West, Delaware has disassociated itself from CASCAR and rewritten its technical rules to accommodate a conventional

Late Model chassis. The track was quick to adopt the 400 hp crate motor and race teams compete on an eight-inch Hoosier slick. With the removal of existing weight penalties, the rules will gradually transition to become more compatible with other tracks and series by 2010, such as the Michigan-based ASA Late Model Series.

In the East, Kawartha is the only track that regularly features both the Limited Late Model and Late Model divisions. Derek Lynch, Kawartha's Race Director and Track Manager, has strong ties with ACT (American-Canadian Tour).

ACT's vision is very similar to the aspirations of the WWS – universal rules, exciting on track action for the fans and affordable racing through the adoption of crate engines. However, the engine program implemented by ACT is different than the 350 and 400-horsepower offerings that have become widely accepted throughout Ontario in the LLM and LM divisions.

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### Is co-operation amongst track owners just a dream?

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During the 2007 season, ACT will expand its reach into Canada, managing and administering the Quebec Late Model Series. In addition to its influence on regional racing in Quebec, Capital City Speedway near Ottawa has adopted the ACT rulebook. In 2007, the ACT Tour will have stops at Circuit Ste. Croix, Autodrome Ste-Eustache and Sanair Super Speedway in Quebec, as well as Kawartha Speedway in Ontario.

With the success that ACT has experienced south of the border, and the increasing influence that it is exerting in Quebec and Eastern Ontario, nobody can find fault in Kawartha's strategy to align its rules with the Vermont-based organization. Kawartha's existing rules are void of the weight penalties imposed by other tracks for strut suspension, coil-overs and wide-five hubs, and additional amendments will be added for 2007 season to closer align with ACT specifications. Teams will be required to switch from 10-inch to eight-inch wide slicks.

The largest change will be the introduc-

tion of a restrictor plate to limit the output of the 400-horsepower crate motors and custom-built engines. This change was implemented in an attempt to make the 350-horsepower Limited Late Model and 355-horsepower ACT crate engines more competitive in the Late Model division. Recently, Kawartha confirmed its intention to combine the Limited and Late Model divisions as early as the 2008 race season in a letter that was addressed to competitors in both divisions.

Where does the decision to combine the two Late Model divisions leave other Ontario Speedways? Flamboro will continue to follow Delaware's lead, gradually removing the weight penalties for cars with strut suspensions and the tracks' support of the 400 hp crate engine is not likely to waiver. Switching to an eight-inch tire would make it easier for Flamboro competitors to race at Delaware or Kawartha, but the 10-inch tire will remain for the 2007 season.

What about the tracks where the Limited Late Model enjoy the top billing? This class has enjoyed considerable growth in recent years, due largely to its affordability and rules that are consistent across area speedways. Maintaining its current rule structure will help to ensure a healthy future for drivers competing at Barrie, Sunset, Varney, Mosport and Peterborough Speedways.

With a clear direction set for local race tracks heading into the new season, 2007 will prove to be very interesting for the racing community. Much of Kawartha's success has been attributed to its Friday night niche in Eastern Ontario, allowing visiting race teams to enhance the entertainment provided by its regular competitors. Diverging rules at Kawartha in both the Limited Late Model and Late Model divisions will discourage visiting drivers from racing at the Speedway, reducing its appeal to race fans that support the track. These race fans are the most important contributors to the future success of local, grassroots racing.

Without the continued support of racing enthusiasts to attend weekly shows, the race teams, tracks and sponsors all suffer. To ensure the continued success of local racing, common rules are required across all area speedways, designed with racer affordability in mind.

In order to advance this cause, the racing community requires strong leadership and a unifying sponsor to demonstrate the benefits to race fans, competitors, track owners and sponsors. ♦