



**The Race:** Tech-Net Spring Sizzler presented by Carquest

**The Place:** Stafford (Conn.) Motor Speedway

**The Date:** Sunday, April 27

**The Time:** 2:30 p.m. ET

**Track Layout:** .5-mile flat oval

**Race Purse:** \$94,676

**2007 Winner:** Donny Lia

**2007 Pole:** Matt Hirschman

Rk	Driver	Points
1	E. Flemke Jr.	180
2	C. Hossfeld	170
3	B. Grigas III	165
4	J. Hartmann	160
5	T. Abele Jr.	155
6	J. Civali	150
7	T. Szegedy	146
8	R. Ruggiero	142
9	R. Pennink	138
10	T. Christopher	134

**Schedule:**

Saturday, April 26:

Practice—10-11:30 a.m., 1:15-1:30 p.m.

Time Trials—1:30 p.m.

**Track Contact:**

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- Tour Makes First 2008 Stop at Stafford
- Modified Pioneers to be Recognized at Spring Sizzler
- Szegedy Looks to Build on Past Stafford Success
- Home Tracks: Christopher Chases Century Mark



## NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour Makes First 2008 Stop at Stafford

The NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour will make the first of four visits in 2008 to Stafford Motor Speedway this weekend as it is the featured event in the 37th Annual Tech-Net Spring Sizzler presented by Carquest in Stafford Springs, Conn.

Following a three-week layoff since the season-opener on April 6 at Thompson (Conn.) International Speedway, the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour will get back on the track with practice and qualifying at Stafford on Saturday, April 26. The Spring Sizzler is set to take the green flag on Sunday, April 27th at approximately 2:30 p.m.

The 2008 Spring Sizzler will mark the 24th time that the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour has taken part in Stafford's opening weekend. Modified legend **Richie Evans** captured the first Sizzler of the

NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour era in 1985, which was one of his 12 wins that year as he earned the inaugural series championship. Evans reached the finish line ahead of a field that included future series champions **Jimmy Spencer**, **Mike McLaughlin**, **Mike Stefanik**, **Jeff Fuller** and **Rick Fuller** as well as three-time NASCAR Modified champion **Bugs Stevens**.

Donny Lia is the defending Spring Sizzler winner as he led 27 of 200 laps to take the 2007 checkered flag, a distant 13 seconds ahead of **Todd Szegedy**. Like Evans, Lia used his Spring Sizzler victory to strengthen what would turn out to be a championship campaign. The Sizzler victory was the first of six for Lia as he captured his first NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour title.

## Modified Pioneers to be Recognized at Spring Sizzler

As part of a season-long celebration of 60 years of Modified champions, NASCAR will honor legends **Ernie Gahan** and **Red Byron** at Stafford Motor Speedway in Stafford Springs, Conn., on April 27 prior to the Tech-Net Spring Sizzler.



1966 NASCAR Modified Champion Ernie Gahan.

NASCAR plans to honor each of its 31 all-time Modified champions throughout the season. The celebration began with the recognition of **Frankie Schneider**, **Donny Lia** and **Richie Evans** at the Icebreaker at Thompson International Speedway on April 6.

Gahan will be present for the pre-race festivities at Stafford and will be honored for the many accomplishments during his career, including the 1966 NASCAR Modified title. Byron, the first NASCAR champion in 1948, will be honored posthumously.

Like many drivers in his day, Gahan traversed the east coast and ran up to four races a week during his three-decade career. After getting his start in auto racing at Dover (N.H.) Speedway in 1948, Gahan compiled more than 300 feature wins on dirt and asphalt, and his career peaked in 1966 when he captured the NASCAR Modified championship. He was a 1990 inductee into the New York State Stock Car Association Hall of

*(Continued on page 2)*



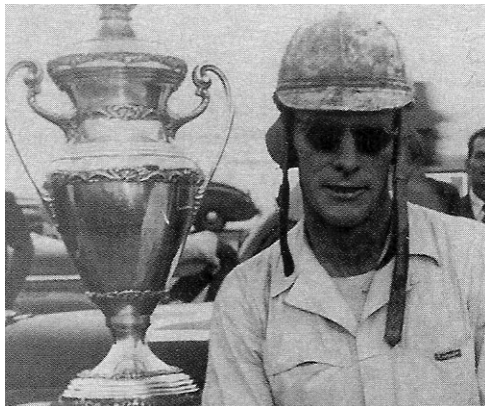
## Past Champions Gahan, Byron to be Honored at Stafford

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Fame and was a member of the inaugural induction class of the New England Auto Racers Hall of Fame in 1998.

The central figure in arguably the three most-important firsts in NASCAR history, Byron won the first NASCAR-sanctioned race on the beaches of Daytona in 1948, captured the first NASCAR title in a Modified that same year and was the first NASCAR stock car champion in 1949. Byron has been a part of NASCAR lore since he navigated the beach and road course in his Ford Modified to win the first NASCAR race on Feb. 15, 1948. A member of the National Motorsports Hall of Fame, Byron will be inducted into the International Motorsports Hall of Fame on April 24. He was also named one of

"NASCAR's 50 Greatest Drivers" in 1998. Byron passed away in 1960 at the age of 45.



Red Byron won the first NASCAR race in 1948.

## Szegedy Looks to Build on Past Stafford Success

One of the more consistent front-runners in the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour today, its no surprise that **Todd Szegedy** has experienced measurable success in his career at Stafford Motor Speedway.

Szegedy, the media's preseason pick to capture the 2008 NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour championship, has registered a quarter of his 12 career victories at Stafford, the most he has compiled at any one track. Szegedy's first win at the half-mile flat oval came during his 2003 championship run and he followed that with wins during the 2004 and 2006 campaigns.

During the last five seasons, Szegedy has started all 20 NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour events held at Stafford. In that timeframe the Ridgefield, Conn., native has registered an average finish of seventh and compiled 10 top-fives, both of which are top marks among all active drivers.

Szegedy came close to building on his win totals in three of the four events last year at Stafford but came up short. He finished as the runner-up to **Donny Lia** in April, was also second to **Ted Christopher** in August, and in the May race he finished fifth.

## Flemke Captures Season-Opener at Thompson

**Ed Flemke Jr.** got a leg up on the field in the pursuit of the 2008 NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour title as he captured the season-opening event at Thompson (Conn.) International Speedway on April 6.

The Icebreaker was scheduled for 150 laps, but rain cut the event short at 92 laps, and Flemke took advantage. Sitting in third place during a caution when race leaders **Todd Szegedy** and **Reggie Ruggiero** pitted, Flemke gambled and stayed out. The gamble paid off when the track collected moisture during the caution and the race never went green again.

The victory was the 17th of Flemke's career. It also marked his fourth trip to victory lane at Thompson, but first in the Icebreaker.

- **James Civali** earned his first pole in 37 career starts.
- In his return to the No. 4, **Chuck Hossfeld** finished as the runner-up.
- **Bobby Grigas III, Joe Hartmann** and **Tom Abele Jr.** all finished in the top five for the first time in their careers.
- The Icebreaker featured the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour debuts of Abele, **Sean Patterson, Glen Reen** and **Eric Rudolph**.
- The winner of the last NWMT event at Thompson, **Bobby Santos** was without a ride for the Icebreaker until he hooked up with owner Joe Brady on Saturday morning and turned in the seventh-fastest time in qualifying later that day.

## News & Notes



**The Race** ... The Spring Sizzler is the traditional season-opening event for Stafford Motor Speedway. This will be the 24th Spring Sizzler in which the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour is the feature event, and the 37th Spring Sizzler overall. This will be the first of four stops for the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour at Stafford in 2008.

**The Procedure** ... Starting Positions 1- 28 will be determined from time trials. The starting field is limited to 33 starters including provisional positions.

**The Track** ... A half-mile flat oval, Stafford Motor Speedway began as a horse racing track in the 1870s. After seven decades as a horse track, the half-mile dirt oval started holding auto races following WW II. Stafford became a NASCAR track in 1959 and was paved for the first time in 1967.

**The Beginning** ... In the first NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour event at Stafford – the 1985 Spring Sizzler – **Richie Evans** took the checkered flag and **Jimmy Spencer** won the pole. The top five finishers in the 1985 Sizzler were Evans, **Brian Ross, Reggie Ruggiero, Spencer** and **Mike Stefanik**. It was an 80-lap, green flag-only event.

**The Winners** ... There have been 26 different race winners at Stafford, led by Stefanik's 19 victories, which is 10 more than Ruggiero, who is second on the Stafford wins list. **Ted Christopher** had the longest win streak in the history of the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour at Stafford with four-straight victories from Sept. 30, 2001 to Aug. 23, 2002. **Todd Szegedy** is the last driver to lead wire-to-wire at SMS as he took the Oct. 28, 2006 checkered flag from the No. 1 starting position.

**Pole Winners** ... There have been 33 different pole winners at Stafford, led by Stefanik's 14. Two of the 86 all-time events at Stafford have no record of a pole winner. Last year's Spring Sizzler saw **Matt Hirschman** set a new track record by recording a qualifying time of 18.009 seconds (99.905 mph).

**The No. 00** ... Joe Brady's car will be piloted by **Frank Ruocco** for all four NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour races at Stafford this year.



## Rookie Abele Impressive in Debut at Icebreaker

Norwich, Conn., native **Tom Abele Jr.** did more than just make the starting field at the Icebreaker, he launched his campaign for the 2008 Sunoco Rookie of the Year Award.

In his NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour debut at Thompson (Conn.) International Speedway on April 6, Abele registered a fifth-place finish and garnered the Sunoco Rookie of the Race Award, finishing well ahead of the four other candidates in the race. His effort was even more impressive considering that he started 30th in the field of 39. By improving 25 positions during the event, Abele secured the POWERade Power Mover of the Race Award.

Abele, who will turn 19 in June, had attempted to qualify for a NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour event only once previously. His team went to Thompson and tried to make the field for last fall's World Series, but just missed

the cut. In his second opportunity, Abele was 36th-fastest in time trials and moved up to the 30th starting position in the starting grid following the redraw and provisionals.

"I've never had to qualify on time trials before, it's always been heat races," Abele said. "We qualified 36th and only beat out three cars, but we made it in by the skin of our teeth."

Once the race went green on Sunday, the rookie kept his nose clean, patiently moved up through the field and wound up with a top-five finish.

"In the race, we just wanted to stay out of trouble," Abele said. "With 39 cars, we were way at the end. I just wanted to stay with the pack, stay on the lead lap and avoid accidents so that I could move up. As the race went along, the car was starting to feel really good, so I kept passing and moving up."

## Up Next: TSI Harley-Davidson 150 at Stafford

The third race on the 2008 schedule for the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour will take place in familiar territory. After the second event of the season at Stafford (Conn.) Motor Speedway on April 27, the tour will have an encore at the track four weeks later with the TSI Harley-Davidson 150 on May 23.

A Friday night affair, the May 23 event will be the first of four dates for the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour in 2008 that is scheduled to run under the lights.

**Donny Lia** won last year's event, but will not be able to defend his title as he is now

running a full schedule in the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series.

Seven-time NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour Champion – and the tour's winningest driver at Stafford – **Mike Stefanik** will be honored prior to the TSI Harley-Davidson 150 as part of the season-long celebration of 60 years of Modified champions.

Stefanik is just two years removed from his seventh title and his last trip to victory lane at Stafford came in the 2007 Fall Final, which pushed his record mark for tour wins at the track to 19.

## Christopher Closes In On Century Mark In Victories

He's already the winningest driver in track history, with victories in just about every division that has been run at Stafford Motor Speedway. But Christopher still has one more milestone left:



100 victories. The Plainville, Conn., driver, who is a championship contender in the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour, is coming off his sixth track championship in Stafford's top division, the SK Modifieds.

Christopher has won 83 SK Modified races, and six Pro Stock races in the track's weekly divisions, and seven NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour races and one NASCAR Camping World Series East race at the half-mile that puts his total at 97 track victories.

Last year, Christopher won the SK Modified track championship by 34 points over runner-up Woody Pitkat and 194 over third-place Keith Rocco. Pitkat won a division-high eight races, while Rocco won four and 2006 champion Frank Ruocco won three.

Corey Hutchings (Late Model), Sean Foster (Limited Late Model), Norman Sears (DARE Stock) and Chris Matthews (SK Light) are Stafford's other returning champions.

In addition to hosting the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour race, Stafford's Spring Sizzler event marks the opening races for the track's NASCAR Whelen All-American Series events.

## Five Questions: Matt Hirschman

**What did it mean to set the track qualifying record last year at the Spring Sizzler?**

Setting fast time last year was really a good feeling. It was really exciting to be on the pole for the Spring Sizzler, and probably the only thing that would be better would be to win it.



**What are your expectations for 2008?**

I definitely feel like we should be a contender this year. Last year we ran second behind Donny Lia in the standings for much of the year. The end of the year it could come down to a couple of points that separate you from a championship and being all the way out of the top five.

**What is it like following in the footsteps of your dad, Tony, a five-time NWMT champion?**

I certainly have some big shoes to fill, but the toughest days of trying to live up to the Hirschman name and legacy are already behind me. I've accomplished nothing of what he has yet, but I've started to accomplish some things on my own.

**Already a champion crew chief, do you aspire**

**to reach that same level as a driver?**

As the crew chief for my father, we had a couple of outstanding years [2004, 2005 titles], and I enjoyed it and worked really hard at it. But while we were doing that, I was always envisioning the day it would be my turn and that I would be the one in that situation. For me, that would be above-and-beyond doing it as a crew chief, because that is what I have envisioned.


**You are in business with your father. What is Hirschman's Speed?**

We are a dealer for Troyer and all components that pertain to Modified racing. Our specialty is Modifieds, and a lot of our customers are people that I compete against all the time in different series and different levels.



## 2008 NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour Special Awards Standings


**COORS LIGHT POLE AWARD**  
James Civali 1



**FEATHERLITE MOST IMPROVED DRIVER**  
Joe Hartmann 1



**SUNOCO ROOKIE OF THE RACE AWARD**  
Tom Abele Jr. 1



**WHELEN ENGINEERING WINNER OF THE RACE AWARD**  
Ed Flemke Jr. 1



**POWERADE POWER MOVE OF THE RACE**  
Tom Abele Jr. 1



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## 2008 NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour Schedule / Results

DATE	RACE	FACILITY	2008 POLESITTER	2008 RACE WINNER
April 6	Icebreaker	Thompson International Speedway, Thompson, Conn.	James Civali	Ed Flemke Jr.
DATE	RACE	FACILITY	2007 POLESITTER	2007 RACE WINNER
April 27	Tech-Net Spring Sizzler Presented by Carquest	Stafford Motor Speedway, Stafford Springs, Conn.	Matt Hirschman	Donny Lia
May 23	TSI Harley-Davidson 150	Stafford Motor Speedway, Stafford Springs, Conn.	Tony Hirschman	Donny Lia
June 19	New England Dodge Dealers 75*	Thompson International Speedway, Thompson, Conn.	Richard Savary	Donny Lia
July 28	New England 100	New Hampshire Motor Speedway, Loudon, N.H.	Ted Christopher	Donny Lia
July 12	NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour	Spencer Speedway, Williamson, N.Y.	---	---
Aug. 2	Miller Lite NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour	Riverhead Raceway, Riverhead, N.Y.	Ted Christopher	Donny Lia
Aug. 8	New England Dodge Dealers 150	Stafford Motor Speedway, Stafford Springs, Conn.	Tony Hirschman	Ted Christopher
Aug. 14	Budweiser 150	Thompson International Speedway, Thompson, Conn.	Todd Szegedy	Todd Szegedy
Aug. 23	NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour	Mansfield Motorsports Park, Mansfield, Ohio	Donny Lia	James Civali
Sept. 7	Sunoco Modified Mania	Thompson International Speedway, Thompson, Conn.	Donny Lia	Ronnie Silk
Sept. 13	New Hampshire 100	New Hampshire Motor Speedway, Loudon, N.H.	Todd Szegedy	Todd Szegedy
Sept. 20	Made in America Whelen 300 **	Martinsville Speedway, Martinsville, Va.	Donny Lia	Donny Lia
Sept. 28	Carquest Fall Final	Stafford Motor Speedway, Stafford Springs, Conn.	Eric Beers	Mike Stefanik
Oct. 4	NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour	Chemung Speedrome, Chemung, N.Y.	---	---
Oct. 18	World Series	Thompson International Speedway, Thompson, Conn.	Tony Ferrante, Jr.	Bobby Santos

\* Green Flag-Only Laps

\*\* Combined Race With Whelen Southern Modified Tour