



TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2008



**The Race:** Icebreaker

**The Place:** Thompson (Conn.) International Speedway

**The Date:** April 6

**The Time:** 3:15 p.m. ET

**Track Layout:** .625-mile paved

**Race Purse:** \$92,276

**2007 Winner:** James Civali

**2007 Pole:** Todd Szegedy

Rk	Driver	Points
1	D. Lia	2471
2	T. Szegedy	2291
3	M. Hirschman	2260
4	R. Silk	2257
5	T. Christopher	2187
6	J. Civali	2178
7	M. Stefanik	2077
8	Ji. Blewett	1883
9	J. Tomaino	1872
10	E. Flemke Jr.	1851

\* 2007 Final Standings \*

**Schedule:**

Saturday, April 5: Practice—10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m., 2:15-2:40 p.m., 5-5:30 p.m.

Time Trials—2:45 p.m.

Sunday, April 6: Green Flag—3:15 p.m.

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- NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour Set to Open 2008 at Thompson
- Trio of Past Modified Champions to be Honored at Icebreaker
- Handful of Past Icebreaker Winners Hungry for More
- 'Yankees' Get a Head Start Down South



## NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour Set to Open 2008 at Thompson

Since the checkered flag dropped on the 2007 NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour season at Thompson International Speedway last October, race teams and fans alike have anxiously anticipated the next event. That six-month wait will finally be over this weekend as the roar of 600-horsepower engines return to the asphalt at the Icebreaker, the traditional opening weekend of NASCAR racing in New England.

For the 23rd time, the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour will be the featured attraction of the Icebreaker. The two-day show will see the Modifieds practice and qualify on Saturday, April 5. The 150-lap race is set to take the green flag at approximately 3:15 p.m., following a pre-race show that will see a trio of past Modified champions honored.

James Civali, who finished sixth in the 2007



season standings, is the defending Icebreaker champion. The Meriden, Conn., native led 52 of the 152 laps in the event en route to the first of his three victories last year. Seven-time NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour Champion Mike Stefanik of Coventry, R.I., has the most victories of any driver at Thompson with 14, including two in the Icebreaker.

Stefanik also has the most Coors Light Poles at Thompson among active drivers with eight. Todd Szegedy of Ridgefield, Conn., earned last year's pole, his third at the track.

## Champions Take Center Stage at the Icebreaker

In what will be a season-long celebration of past Modified champions, NASCAR will kick off its 2008 Whelen Modified Tour campaign by honoring Frankie Schneider, Donny Lia and Richie Evans at the Icebreaker.



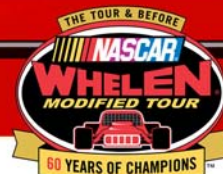
1952 NASCAR Modified Champion Frankie Schneider.

Schneider, who captured the NASCAR Modified division title in 1952, is the oldest living champion. Lia became the 60th Modified champion in NASCAR history when he won his first NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour title in 2007. Both champions will be in attendance and will be honored during the pre-race festivities.

In addition, NASCAR will recognize the accomplishments of one of the greatest champions in Modified history: Richie Evans. Evans will be represented at the Icebreaker by family members, and one of his restored cars that is privately owned will be on hand for the event.

New Jersey's Schneider began racing in 1947, one year before the formation of NASCAR. A driver of modified, stock, sprint and midget cars, Schneider is believed to have won more than 750 races in his long and distinguished career. In the days where there were no limits to how many events in which a driver

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## Past Champions Schneider, Lia and Evans to be Honored in Season-Opener at Thompson



Nine-time Modified Champion Richie Evans.

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could participate, Schneider's Modified win total during his 1952 championship season is said to have reached 100.

Lia captured the 2007 NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour championship in a storybook

season. With five career wins entering 2007 as an owner-operator, Lia teamed up with longtime Modified owner Bob Garbarino to run the "Mystic Missile." With the new partnership, Lia and Garbarino visited victory lane six times en route to the first championship for both. A New York native, Lia parlayed his Modified success into a ride this year in the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series.

The king of Modified racing, Evans' accomplishments are nearly immeasurable. The Rome, N.Y., native captured nine Modified titles in a 13-year span, including a remarkable eight in a row from 1978-85. Evans ranked No. 1 in the 2003 release of "NASCAR All-Time Modified Top 10 Drivers," and he was included in "The 50 Greatest NASCAR Drivers of All Time" list in 1998. In the first year of the current NASCAR

Whelen Modified Tour format – 1985 – Evans won 12 races, including all four events at Thompson. Evans had already clinched his ninth career title heading into the season's final race at Martinsville, but tragically perished in an accident during a practice session, cutting short a career that is unmatched still today.



2007 champion: Donny Lia.

## Handful of Past Icebreaker Winners Hungry for More

The starting lineup for Sunday's Icebreaker at Thompson International Speedway is projected to include at least five former champions of the event.

Ted Christopher (2004, 2005), James Civali (2007), Rick Fuller (1991, 1997, 2001), Chuck Hossfeld (2003) and Mike Stefanik (1998, 2006) are all expected to be in the field when the green flag drops on Sunday.

Even though each of those five have reached victory lane in the season-opener before, don't expect them to be any less hungry for a return trip.

"The first race of the year is very important," Fuller said. "We put a lot of emphasis on it [the Icebreaker] because it sets the tempo."

History has shown that winning the opener is not essential to earning a championship, however. Of the 22 all-time winners of the Icebreaker since 1985, only four have gone on to capture the season title.

While the first race of the year rarely makes or breaks the season, success in the event undoubtedly gets a team headed in the right direction.

"If you have a problem, and don't finish, you

feel like you're digging yourself out of a hole for probably about halfway through the season," Fuller said.

Regardless of whether Icebreaker success is a predictor of how the season will progress or not, one thing is for sure, a good finish will make the three-week layoff before the second race of the year less stressful.

"It's always nice to have a good showing at the first event," Fuller said. "I've won it a few times and, boy, that really feels great."

## NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour at Thompson: Active Driver Statistics

### Career Wins

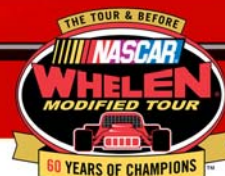
Wins	Driver	Last
14	M. Stefanik	4/9/06
8	R. Fuller	4/22/01
6	T. Christopher	8/17/06
6	R. Ruggiero	10/15/06
3	E. Flemke Jr.	9/12/04
2	Todd Szegedy	8/16/07
1	Six drivers	

### Career Poles

Wins	Driver	Last
8	M. Stefanik	4/15/98
5	R. Ruggiero	10/16/88
4	T. Christopher	10/27/02
4	E. Flemke Jr.	8/15/02
3	Todd Szegedy	8/16/07
2	R. Fuller	3/29/92
1	Six drivers	

### Icebreaker Wins

Wins	Driver	Last
3	R. Fuller	4/22/01
2	T. Christopher	4/10/05
2	M. Stefanik	4/9/06
1	J. Civali	4/15/07
1	C. Hossfeld	4/6/03



## 'Yankees' Get a Head Start Racing NASCAR Whelen Southern Modified Tour Events

A host of NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour regulars got an early taste of the action in North Carolina on March 22 to kick off their 2008 campaign.

At the season-opener of the NASCAR Whelen Southern Modified Tour at Caraway Speedway in Asheboro, seven full-time drivers from the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour took the green flag. The northern contingent made up more than one-quarter of the 26-car starting grid.

Making the trek down south, a quartet of 'Yankees' was able to earn four of the top eight finishes. Ted Christopher and L.W. Miller battled to a furious finish, but the defending NASCAR Whelen Southern Modified Tour Champion was able to edge out Christopher by .213 of-a-second.

Bobby Grigas III, Ronnie Silk and Matt Hirschman joined Christopher among NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour regulars that placed in the top 10 at Caraway.

Rowan Pennink also finished 11th while Kevin Goodale came in 14th and James Civali was 22nd.

A part-time driver on the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour – and NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour regular – Andy Seuss finished 10th in the opener and earned the POWERADE Power Move of the Race Award after starting 25th.

"The cars are prepared well, but I look at it [running races prior to the Icebreaker] as more of a benefit to me to get some seat time," Hirschman said. "I haven't raced since November, so being out of the car that long it

takes some time to get a rhythm back."

Although not a firm predictor of success in the Icebreaker, recent history shows that 'Yankees' running in the NASCAR Whelen Southern Modified Tour opener have fared well at Thompson. After running in the 2007 NWSMT opener at Caraway, Grigas, Hirschman and Chuck Hossfeld all posted top-10 finishes at the Icebreaker. In 2006 Christopher and Hossfeld finished 1-2 at Caraway, then posted top-fives at Thompson while Jamie Tomaino was in the top-10 in both.

"I like to open the season with a couple of races before the Icebreaker," Hirschman said. "The Icebreaker is tough and the competition is tough. Last year I did three races before the Icebreaker and we were really good in qualifying

## Next Stop: Spring Sizzler at Stafford

Following a three-week layoff, the second stop for the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour in 2008 will be Stafford Motor Speedway on Sunday, April 27, in Stafford Springs, Conn.

The first of four events at Stafford for the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour this season, the Carquest Tech-Net Spring Sizzler is the traditional opening show for the track each year.



The action will get underway for the Modifieds on Saturday, April 26, with practice and qualifying. Practice sessions will take place from 10-11:30 a.m., and 1:15-1:30 p.m. Qualifying, which will determine the fasted 28 cars for the field, is set for 1:30 p.m. The race is scheduled to go green on Sunday at approximately 2:30 p.m.

Donny Lia won last year's Spring Sizzler, but will not defend his race title as he now drives the No. 71 TRG Chevrolet in the NASCAR Craftsman Trucks Series. Matt Hirschman captured the Coors Light Pole a year ago.

### Stafford Win Leaders – Active Drivers

Wins	Driver	Last
19	M. Stefanik	9/29/07
9	R. Ruggiero	3/29/98
7	T. Christopher	8/11/07
5	R. Fuller	4/30/00
3	E. Flemke Jr.	5/26/00

## Five Questions: Ryan Preece



**What was the most important thing you learned about driving a Modified as a rookie in 2007?**

Being able to hold yourself back early in the race. You've got to get to the front, but at the same time, you don't want to get caught up in a wreck on lap 50 of a 300-lap race.

**What does it mean to you to now be in the seat of "Ole Blue?"**

That's something big. That's a real big accomplishment, to be able to get in that car because of the history and the potential to win in that car year-after year. It's a great car.

**How did you get your start in racing?**

I always wanted to race. My dad raced Pro-Stocks at Thompson. We went to a track called Silver City in Meriden (Conn.) when I was about six years old. My brother Matt and I shared a Quarter Midget, and we started off from there.

**What is your favorite racing memory?**

When I went out to Indiana [Indianapolis Speedrome] to race Midgets and we won our heat and our feature the first time out.

**What is the biggest obstacle to being a full-time driver and a high school student?**

You have to really stay on top of things. You really learn how to keep yourself organized and stay ahead of the game ... one step ahead.



## 2007 NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour Special Awards Standings

### POLE AWARD

Donny Lia	3
Todd Szegedy	3
Ted Christopher	2
Tony Hirschman	2
Eric Beers	1
Matt Hirschman	1
Richard Savary	1
Ronnie Silk	1

### WHELEN ENGINEERING WINNER OF THE RACE AWARD

Donny Lia	6
James Civali	3
Todd Szegedy	2
Jimmy Blewett	1
Ted Christopher	1
Ronnie Silk	1
Mike Stefanik	1



### SUNOCO ROOKIE OF THE RACE AWARD

Bobby Santos III	5
Bobby Grigas III	2
Woody Pitkat	2
Ryan Preece	2
Billy Pauch Jr.	2
Rowan Pennink	1
Richard Savary	1



### FEATHERLITE MOST IMPROVED DRIVER

John Blewett III	2
James Civali	2
Jimmy Blewett	2
Ted Christopher	2
Ed Flemke Jr.	1
Dick Houlihan	1
Rowan Pennink	1
Reggie Ruggiero	1
Danny Sammons	1
Mike Stefanik	1
Zach Sylvester	1



### POWERADE POWER MOVE OF THE RACE

Mike Stefanik	2
Eric Beers	1
Eric Berndt	1
Jimmy Blewett	1
John Blewett III	1
James Civali	1
Kevin Goodale	1
Joseph Hartmann	1
Matt Hirschman	1
Jerry Marquis	1
Rowan Pennink	1
Woody Pitkat	1



Reggie Ruggiero	1
Richard Savary	1
Todd Szegedy	1



*James Civali earned his first Icebreaker win in 2007.*

### Thompson by the Numbers

**5/8**..... Length (mi.) of the track

**14**..... NWMT wins by Mike Stefanik, most all-time

**81.7**..... Record (mph) average speed of an NWMT race

**101**..... All-time NWMT events at the track

**1940**.... Year the track opened

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