

Flemming surges into Atlantic Cat 250

By MONTY MOSHER Sports Reporter

The only driver from Nova Scotia to win an Atlantic Cat 250 could be the favourite to do it again on Saturday night at Scotia SpeedWorld.

Halifax's John Flemming, the winner of the inaugural Atlantic Cat event in 2000, is on a roll in the No. 97 Roofing Connection Dodge heading into one of the marquee shows on the Parts For Trucks Pro Stock Tour.

The three-time Maritime pro stock champion nearly had the IWK 250 at Riverside International Speedway in James River on July 23. He led more than 200 laps until P.E.I.'s Darren MacKinnon passed him on a restart with three laps to go.

There were no slip ups last weekend as he took a 100-lap feature at Oyster Bed Speedway in P.E.I. for his first tour win since 2006, a season that saw him take three checkered flags.

"It's one of my favourite races," the 44-year-old Flemming said of the Atlantic Cat race. "I don't know if it's me, my equipment or the way we prepare for it, but we usually do pretty well there. Hopefully we can get there and lead a bunch of laps and maybe pull another one off."

It's been a hard road for Flemming in recent times. Once a fixture in victory lane, he'd gone more than 40 races without a win until striking gold in P.E.I.

"Frustrated would be an understatement," he said. "I was starting to wonder if we'd ever win again. Every time we got into position to pull something off something would jump out and bite us. It was freaky, really."

Running strong in P.E.I. after the disappointment of the IWK 250 was good for team morale.

"We figured we had to go over there and put on a good performance and get back in this championship race," said Flemming, currently fourth in the point standings, 33 off the lead.

"If you're winning races the points always take care of themselves and now that we're starting to win and lead a bunch of laps, if we keep running good we should make it interesting."

Flemming will be challenged in the field by the best Maritime racers along with two-time Atlantic Cat 250 champion Ben Rowe of Turner, Me. Rowe won in 2002-03.

The five-time Pro All-Stars Series champion will drive the No. 10 Chevy out of Steve Henderson's Dexter Construction/Municipal Contracting stable. Henderson also backs the No.

0 car driver by 2009 tour champ Shawn Turple of Enfield, another contender for the title in the \$50,000 race.

Rowe ran a solid third for Henderson in last year's race.

The race begins the homestretch for the tour with just three stops remaining after Saturday night.

Fredericton's Shawn Tucker, the reigning champion chasing a fourth series title, leads the chase for top spot with 1,565 points, four ahead of Timberlea's Wayne Smith. Smith is after a third series banner and record sixth Maritime stock car championship overall.

Mackinnon remains in the chase at 1,545 with Flemming fourth at 1,532, P.E.I.'s Kent Vincent fifth at 1,515 and Turple sixth at 1,512.

Rowe, his father Mike and fellow Maine driver Johnny Clark are the only two-time winners in the race.

Louie Mechalides of Massachusetts, Travis Benjamin and Cassius Clark of Maine and New Brunswick's Lonnie Sommerville are the other winners. Cassius Clark won last year as a fill-in driver for P.E.I.'s Jonathan Hicken, who was away at a wedding.

Saturday's winner earns the Scott Fraser Memorial Cup, named for the late racing champion from Shubenacadie. Race Time Radio (RTR) will air the race live on The Score, Sirius Satellite Radio Channel 158, starting at 7 p.m.

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