

DICKIES 200

SPORTS

Whitlock hoping to drive into sunset with victory at Mosport

NORRIS MCDONALD
STAFF REPORTER

Just before the 2009 NASCAR Canadian Tire Series season started, veteran driver Dave Whitlock announced his retirement.

This would be his final year of racing, he said.

Then he went to the first race at St. Eustache, Que., three weeks ago and won it — his first victory since NASCAR took over the sanctioning of big-league stock car racing in Canada three years ago.

Should he have announced he was quitting earlier?

“No,” laughed the three-time CASCAR Super Series champ, admitting the difficulties he’s had racing under the NASCAR banner.

“We knew we could still win. But all the pieces finally came together for us in St. Eustache. Winning there was a pretty neat deal.”

Whitlock, of Wyoming, Ont., and more than 20 other NASCAR Canada cars and drivers are at Mosport International Raceway this weekend where they’ll run the Dickies 200 on the famous road course tomorrow afternoon.

Whitlock, 42, is sitting second in the Canadian Tire standings after finishing seventh at London’s Delaware Speedway last weekend.

He said earlier this week that he’s looking forward to racing on something other than ovals.

“When you’re racing on an oval, smooth and consistent is what

works best,” he said. “But on a road course, you really have to manhandle the car. You throw the car into a corner and then slide it. Sliding is the fastest way out of a corner. It’s going to be fun out there at Mosport.”

Whitlock said the competition in the NASCAR series is the toughest he’s seen in years.

“At any race, you’ve got between 12 and 15 guys who can win,” he said.

“Scott Steckly (the defending national champion) has really come into his own the last couple of years. Kerry Micks, Donnie Thompson, Mark Dilley — those guys are always tough.

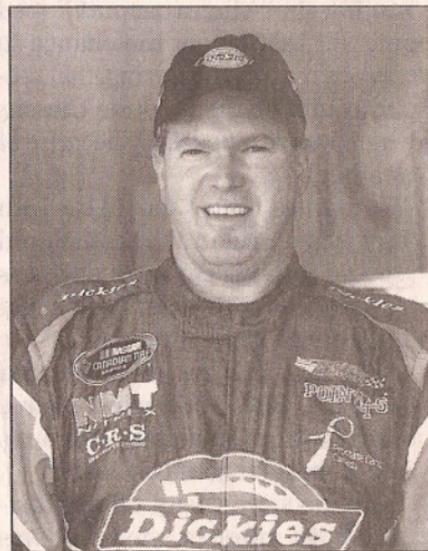
“We’re racing door-handle-to-

door-handle these days and nobody’s giving an inch.”

Whitlock said he’s quitting race-driving because he wants to spend more time with his family (he and his wife have three daughters).

The Dickies 200, the third race in the 13-race Canadian Tire Championship, will go to the post tomorrow at 1:30 p.m. There are support races before and after the main event.

Last year’s race winner, J.R. Fitzpatrick of Cambridge, will be starting from the rear. He’s driving a Kevin Harvick entry in today’s NASCAR Camping World Truck Series race at Michigan International Speedway, so he’ll miss this afternoon’s qualifying as a result.



Veteran driver Dave Whitlock will retire at the end of this season.