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■ **CANADIAN TIRE SERIES:** Wyoming driver earns his first victory to start his final season



Special to Sun Media

Dave Whitlock of Wyoming, centre, celebrates his victory yesterday in the NASCAR Canadian Tire Series season opener at St-Eustache, Que., on the podium with runner-up Kerry Micks, left, of Mount Albert and third-place finisher Ron Beauchamp Jr. of Windsor.

Whitlock takes opener

BY JIM CRESSMAN
London Free Press

Dave Whitlock's Victory Tour started with a bang Saturday night in St-Eustache, Que.,

Just five days after announcing this is his final year in a touring series, the Wyoming resident won the NASCAR Canadian Tire Series season-opening Tufco 250.

The three-time CASCAR Super Series national champion grabbed the lead at Autodrome St-Eustache late in the race and survived a green-white-checked finish to earn his first career Canadian Tire Series victory.

Whitlock wrested the lead

from 2007 series champion Andrew Ranger of Roxton Pond, Que., on Lap 242 and then held off charges from Kerry Micks of Mount Albert and Ron Beauchamp Jr. of Windsor, who finished second and third respectively.

"That was a lot of fun," Whitlock said after finishing just .244 seconds ahead of Micks. "We haven't been very good the last couple of years, but we want to go out with a bang."

Defending series champion Scott Steckley of Milverton finished fourth, while Whitlock's teammate, Mark Dilley of Barrie, was fifth.

Whitlock, 42, announced a

week ago he'll retire at the end of this racing season to spend more time with his wife, children and the family business.

"I've had a great career with many memorable wins and championships, but it's time to move on," he said at the time.

Next up for the Canadian Tire Series is June 6 at Delaware Speedway. That 200-lap race begins at 8 p.m. as the series makes its first appearance at Delaware since replacing the Super Series in 2007.

Whitlock has never won a major race at his home track. His career began on the half-mile oval in 1985.

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