



2016 Parts for Trucks Pro Stock Tour Rookie of the Year title winner Harry Ross White (No. 49). PHOTO BY MCCARTHY PHOTOGRAPHIC

# THE MARITIME TOUR'S TOP PROSPECTS

## THE 2017 PARTS FOR TRUCKS PRO STOCK GRID WILL FEATURE A STRONG ROOKIE CLASS

By Tim Terry

The past few seasons in Atlantic Canada have seen some of the top talents hang up the helmet or scale back their schedules. The days of seeing Shawn Tucker and Wayne Smith up front dominating big Late Model races in the region is seemingly over and John Flemming scaled back his efforts to part-time at the beginning of the 2016 season.

While the big stars at the top of the sport are closer to retirement than the start of their racing careers, there are a few new drivers and teams finding their way onto the top rung of the racing ladder in the region. This has been evident in recent years on both the Parts for Trucks Pro Stock Tour and in the Pro Stock class at Speedway 660 in Geary, New Brunswick and it appears that 2017 will be a continuation in the trend.

The 2016 Parts for Trucks Pro Stock Tour saw two drivers move up from their home track to compete full-time on the series. Harry Ross White, who had one Pro Stock start to his credit, went head-to-head with Street Stock driver Nevin Scott. Hoss carried a slight edge throughout the season, but Scott kept him

honest throughout the year, even sitting on the pole and scoring a career best finish in the season finale Dartmouth Dodge 200. The edge that Hoss had throughout the year was enough to win the Rookie of the Year Award on the series over Scott.

The Speedway 660 Pro Stock Rookie crop in 2016 brought lots of hype because of the size of the class. Lyttleton, NB youngster Ashton Tucker edged out "The Camry Kid" Brent Roy by two points in a battle that went down to literally the final laps of the last point feature of the year. The year also saw Jeff Doherty, Ian Rasmussen, Brandon Skidmore and Devin Snell compete in their maiden voyage full season, which made a class of eight competing at the track.

On the Tour, at least three freshmen have marked their intentions in competing on the series full-time with two more waiting in the wings that could join the fray before the green flag flies on May 20 at Scotia Speedworld for the Lucas Oil 150.

The two heavy favourites heading into the 12-race schedule are Jarrett Butcher and Robbie MacEwen. Each driver has experience

in a Pro Stock, competing in five races each last year and MacEwen having another handful of starts previous to 2016. Butcher grew up racing Legend and Bandolero cars at Scotia Speedworld, winning two track titles in each class. MacEwen has had success in the Late Model class at Oyster Bed Speedway with a track title in the class in 2014. If you look at previous Pro Stock finishes, you might give MacEwen an edge with a podium finish in the 2015 IWK 250 at Riverside Speedway. Both recorded two top ten finishes in the series in 2016, making this one pretty even heading into the first race.

The wild card or dark horse in the Parts for Trucks Pro Stock Tour Exide Batteries Rookie of the Year battle might be Shubenacadie, NS's Stevie Lively. Announced in March at the Atlantic Outdoor Sports and RV Show, Lively will be driving a second entry as a teammate to third year Tour driver DJ Casey. Lively is a two-time Thunder champion at Scotia Speedworld, winning the 2016 championship in a tiebreaker over Dave Matthews.

Lively had previously announced he was running a Late Model Sportsman in 2017, but the

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offer to team with Casey in a Pro Stock was a no-brainer.

Nicholas Naugle and Shannon Squires have both indicated the Parts for Trucks Pro Stock Tour is on their schedule of events for 2017 but as of press time have not announced if they will run the full schedule and compete for the Rookie of the Year Award.

At Speedway 660, at least four more drivers have made the announcement they will compete full-time in a Pro Stock and compete for the Rookie of the Year honours in the Re/Max Group Four Realty Pro Stock division.

Jon Gahan comes to the division with the most experience, competing in four races at the track in 2016; the most one can race in before losing his rookie stripe. Gahan's father Paul also competes in the class part-time. They will be joined by rookie driver Andrew McKay who competed in a pair of races last year. McKay's daughter Sarah will transition to the weekly grind at Speedway 660 after racing the past three seasons with the Parts for Trucks Pro Stock Tour.

Two Sportsman drivers will also climb the ladder to join the Pro Stock division in 2017. The champion of the Martin's Home Heating Sportsman division will slide through the window of a McLaughlin Roof Trusses team car as Ryan Messer continues up the ranks of short track racing in the region. Messer has won championships in every discipline he has raced in, including Bandolero, the Atlantic Modified Tour and Late Model Sportsman. The teenager will run as a teammate to current Pro Stock titlist Greg Fahey.

While some may be ready to put their money down on Messer, Shawn Warren is sure to make a strong case for the Rookie of the Year Award as well. Warren is a veteran of the Sportsman ranks at Speedway 660 and has won his share of features over the past few seasons, including a barnburner in 2016 that saw Warren and Justin Cole run side-by-side for a majority of the 40 lap race. Warren will drive a chassis that John Flemming drove to a Parts for Trucks Pro Stock Tour title.

If you are keeping score, seven teams will be making the jump to a Pro Stock in 2017, with the possibility of more committing before the green flag drops in May. Add those to the ten that did the same the year previous, and the future of the top class in Atlantic Canadian short track racing has a bright future if the past two seasons are any indication. Wherever you call home for your Pro Stock racing endeavours, you are sure to see a show all summer long, not only at the front of the field but with the newcomers as they drive hard to realize their Rookie of the Year dreams. •



2017 IWK 250 celebrity racer Mark Martin.  
PHOTO BY NASCAR / GETTY IMAGES

### CAT CAR FOR KIDS RETURNS TO IWK 250:

A time-honoured tradition for the annual IWK 250 event at Riverside International Speedway will continue in 2017 with the fan-favourite Cat Car for Kids entry for NASCAR Hall of Fame driver Mark Martin. Sponsored by heavy equipment distributor Atlantic Cat, the Nova-Racing prepared car has previously been driven by such notables as Brad Keselowski, Joey Logano, Matt Crafton, Ricky Craven and the only celebrity racer to win the prestigious IWK 250, Regan Smith.

"The Atlantic Cat family is excited to partner with Riverside Speedway for the tenth year to bring this one-of-a-kind experience to the IWK," said Andy Hunt, executive vice president and general manager of Atlantic Cat.

The concept behind the Cat Car for Kids was to allow patients and their families to feel connected to an on-track competitor who will be competing for the prestigious John W. Chisholm Memorial Award. As part of the Cat Car for Kids promotion, Martin will take time before the Pro Stock Tour event to visit the IWK Health Centre in Halifax to meet children who are receiving treatment there.

"It's an honour to drive the Cat Car for Kids and visit the IWK Health Centre," said Martin. "I am so excited to be a part of this great event that combines my passion of racing and love of helping children."

The IWK 250 presented by Steve Lewis

### MARITIME MINI STOCK TOUR TO DEBUT THIS YEAR:

Conceived during a meeting at a local Tim Hortons restaurant, the Maritime Mini Stock Tour will face its inaugural season in 2017, racing a tentative six-date schedule based primarily in New Brunswick.

"A bunch of us had been kicking this idea around for a couple of years," said series president Drew MacEachern. "We saw the numbers dropping off at the local tracks, so we came up with an idea that would try to unite all Mini Stocks under one [rule] book."

With title sponsorship from the Rotary Lifts brand of MJS Holdings, the new touring Mini Stock division will initially be limited to four-cylinder Hondas from the model years

Auto Body is a three-day event running July 13-15 on the Antigonish, NS oval. Since its inception, the IWK 250 has not only raised awareness for the medical facility, but has provided more than \$400,000 in charitable donations to the hospital.

### PARTS FOR TRUCKS RETURNS TO PRO STOCK TOUR:

A partner with the Maritime Pro Stock Tour since its inception seven years ago, Parts for Trucks will return in 2017 as the title sponsor for the series.

"Parts for Trucks has been involved in stock car racing for many years," said Part for Trucks Pro Stock Tour general manager Ken Cunning. "We are very proud of our long-standing partnership with such a great Atlantic Canadian company."

The 12-date calendar will see competitors race four times at Scotia Speedworld, with three dates each reserved for Petty International Raceway and Riverside International Speedway. Single stops will be made at New Brunswick's Speedway 660 and on Prince Edward Island at Oyster Bed Speedway.

### LUCAS OIL BACK ON PRO STOCK TOUR:

A perennial supporter of the Parts for Trucks Pro Stock Tour, Lucas Oil has signed agreements to be the title sponsor for a trio of race dates on the 2017 tour schedule. The Lucas Oil sponsorship will begin with the season opener at Scotia Speedworld, followed by the date at Oyster Bed Speedway and again at the penultimate round at Riverside Speedway. This year marks the 11th year of Lucas Oil involvement with the Tour.

"We've always had the belief that this series is one of the best in Canada," said John Coyle, Territory Manager for Lucas Oil Products. "Lucas Oil Products are proud to be back again as a major sponsor of the Tour, 11 years and counting!" •

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1988-2000 and powered by either 1.4 or 1.6 litre engines.

"We chose Hondas because that's what we knew, I've been racing one for years," said MacEachern. "Once we get up and running, we'll look at ways to incorporate other cars."

Over 20 drivers have already pre-registered for the 2017 season.

"We're scheduled to run Riverside on the Friday night of their NASCAR Pinty's Series date, supporting the Sportsman Series. I think we'll have close to 30 cars at Antigonish for that race," said MacEachern.

A 2017 schedule is close to being finalized, and will be announced on their website at [maritimeministocktour.com](http://maritimeministocktour.com). •