

Micks determined, but no cigar

When it comes to short-track racing, Kerry Micks is nobody's fool. If he had more laps in the Crown Jewel 200 at Cayuga Speedway last Saturday night, he would have won the opening round of the 2008 NASCAR-Canadian Tire Series.

The Mount Albert racer placed second in the event to Scott Steckly, of Milverton. But he woke up the fans in the latter half of the race chasing down the leaders after falling behind.

Starting sixth, Micks stayed in the top five, and took the point at the halfway mark when the rest of the field came in for tires. He elected to stay out, and on lap 127 pitted for new tires. He returned to the Cayuga oval out of the top 10, but with his fresh rubber started to chase the leaders. By lap 160 he was up to fifth spot, slugging his way past



Tim MILLER

competitors. He got by third-place finisher Ron Beauchamp, of Windsor, with two laps to go, and was gaining on Steckly but ran out of time.

"Our strategy came together for us," said Micks, 47, who won two NASCAR-CTC events last year in his Ford. "My hat's off to the entire team."

Hamilton drivers did not fare well in the race.

Jim Lapceвич fought handling and tire issues all night, placing 19th. Pole-sitter Don Thomson led for the first 45 circuits, but he

too had handling issues, placing 13th. Nik Lapceвич took 14th spot after starting 18th in the 23-car field.

III

WEEKEND WINNERS: **Alain Bergeron**, of St. Pie, Que., won the A-Main 20-lap Sprint Car race at Ohsweken Speedway Friday night, scooting by **Jared Zimbardi**, of Salamanca, N.Y., on the last lap. Alton's **Keith Dempster** was third. **Cody MacPherson**, of St. Catharines, took the Thunder Stocks feature, and Brantford's **Mitchell Brown** won the Mini Stock main.

Ross Millson achieved his best finish yet in the 2008 Parts Canada Superbike Championship with a sixth-place finish in the Superbike class. The Hamilton rider was competing with his Suzuki GSX-R1000 on the

Calabogie road course in round one of the series ... The rain-cancelled PMRA Pro Mod Challenge started at Toronto Motorsports Park May 17 is to be rescheduled in June.

There were no winners at the recent Can-Am Midget feature at Peterborough Speedway, where a massive pileup on the second lap took out 11 of the 18 starters and the race was cancelled. No one was injured in the melee

If you're interested in watching Sprint Cars on asphalt, Delaware Speedway will host the only Canadian stop of the AVSS (Auto Value Super Sprints) tour this year on June 6. There are several Canadians competing in this Michigan-based series.

Tim Miller is a longtime motorsports writer and author of several books on the sport

SPORTS NOTEBOOK

Microsoft to sponsor new MLS club

[SEATTLE] Microsoft will sponsor the new MLS team in Seattle.

The Seattle Sounders FC will be sponsored by Microsoft and Xbox Live 360, the team announced yesterday. Microsoft will pay a reported \$20 million US over five years.

Microsoft executive Robbie Bach said the growth and global scope of soccer enticed the company to get involved with sponsoring a sports franchise. The team will begin play in the 2009 season.

Ochoa withdraws from tournament

[MOUNT PLEASANT, S.C.] Lorena Ochoa withdrew from the Ginn Tribute, putting the top-ranked player's duel with tournament host Annika Sorenstam on hold.

Ochoa left for Mexico on Tuesday night, saying in a statement that her uncle was ill.

"I am very sorry to have to withdraw," Ochoa said. "I need to be with my uncle and my family right now."

Ochoa has won six of 13 LPGA tournaments this season. Sorenstam, who Ochoa surpassed last season to take the top spot, has three wins in her final year on the LPGA Tour. Sorenstam announced this month she'll retire after the season.

She offered Ochoa her support.

David Beckham dazzles in England

[WEMBLEY, ENGLAND] David Beckham is doing his best to dazzle American soccer fans with his precision free kicks. He also is making sure they don't forget about them back in England.

Beckham's perfect curling ball set up John Terry for the go-ahead goal in the 38th minute, and England outclassed the United States 2-0 in a friendly at Wembley.

Hamilton Spectator wire services

500 winner has Indy Series tradition on his side

By Mike HARRIS

Scott Dixon is hoping that winning the Indianapolis 500 is just the first big step toward another major goal — winning a second IRL IndyCar Series title.

It's been a long, tough five years since the New Zealander took the championship in his rookie year. And last year provided the biggest disappointment in that stretch.

After a season-long title duel with Dario Franchitti, all Dixon had to do was finish ahead of the Scot in the season-finale at Chicagoland Speedway and a second title would be his. Dixon was leading Franchitti on the last lap as both drivers tried to stretch their final fuel load to the finish. Franchitti made it. Dixon didn't, falling less than a half-lap short. Title gone.

Instead of crushing the spirit of Dixon, 27, and his Chip Ganassi



JEFF HAYNES / REUTERS

HIS MAIN GOAL. Scott Dixon is steering toward a three-year tradition where the Indy 500 winner goes on to claim the IRL IndyCar Series title in the same season.

Racing team, that agonizing loss served to renew their determination.

"I think it even goes back further than that," Dixon said. "We had the dominance of winning three races

in a row and going for four and trying to chase down Dario for the championship ... everything that everybody was doing was just falling into the right place.

"Everybody was working well to-

gether, and we've carried on that confidence level and the success we had at the end of last year, even if we didn't come away with the championship."

Now Dixon is the winner of the world's richest and most prestigious open-wheel race, and that may have given him just the edge he needs to win the 2008 title

The past three Indy winners — Dan Wheldon, Sam Hornish Jr. and Franchitti — have all gone on to win the IndyCar title in the same season.

"We definitely knew that because of last season," said Dixon as his team prepared for Sunday's race at Milwaukee. "And we were definitely trying to stop that tradition (last year). This year, we won the 500, and it sounds like a pretty good tradition."

The Associated Press