Mike Rowe Wins Oxford 250 Qualifier, Sets Stage for Dramatic Oxford Championship Series Title Fight

Story courtesy of Racing America

Mike Rowe scored an emotional and impressive victory on Saturday, August 15 in the Plant's Seafood 100 at Oxford Plains Speedway.

Driving from 20th in the 29-car field, Rowe took the lead in a three-wide maneuver around D.J. Shaw and Dave Farrington with eight laps to go, just before a caution flag flew. Rowe maintained the lead on the ensuing restart to win the 100-lap Super Late Model feature.

Rowe is a seven-time track champion closing in on 160 career wins at the Maine facility. Just four days shy of his 76th birthday, Rowe is still racing and winning at Oxford Plains - and could very well an eighth track championship.

Unofficially, Rowe leaves Oxford Plains with a one-point advantage in the Oxford Championship Series over Brandon Barker. One points-paying event remains for the Super Late Models, another 100-lap feature scheduled for Monday, September 7.

Rowe's 157th career win couldn't come at a better time. Not only did he unofficially take the championship lead, but he also earned a provisional starting position in the Oxford 250, as Saturday's race served as an Oxford 250 qualifier.

Rowe will be seeking a fourth Oxford 250 crown in the most prestigious and historic event at Oxford Plains Speedway and one of the crown jewel events in Super Late Model racing. Should he win the Nitro Trailers Oxford 250, he will become the first four-time winner of the event.

After a hot start to the season, Rowe is particularly glad to pick up this win to turn things around during a summer slide.

"We've been struggling a little bit. I've been running in the back with Max," said Rowe in victory lane. "We've been losing the tire stagger. I tell you, my crew, they got it all together for me tonight. We put it all together."

With the razor-thin margin in the championship battle, Rowe knows he will have his hands full on Labor Day when the Oxford Championship Series Super Late Model crown is decided.

"Brandon, you're going to be sick in a couple of weeks," joked Rowe. "No, he's not going to go away easy. I tell you, Brandon, he's a godo guy. He's a good racer. He's fun to race with. If he beats me, good for him."

Rowe also dedicated the victory to Rudy Kyllonen, Jr., who recently passed away.

"We lost a real good friend last week," said Rowe. "Rudy Kyllonen, I don't know if anybody knows him. Tommy Rooker drove for him.

"I told Tammy at the funeral, I said at the funeral I'm going to try to win one for Rudy. We did it. This one's for Rudy. He's going to give the trophy for Natalie. I don't know if she's up there tonight, but this one's for you."

D.J. Shaw finished second after starting sixth. He was poised to battle pole-sitter Dave Farrington, Jr. for the lead late in the race when Rowe stormed around both drivers on his charge through the field.

Rowe's performance impressed Shaw, announcing the strength of the No. 24 team entering the Oxford 250 weekend at the end of this month.

"He showed us we've got a little work to do," Shaw said. "We had a pretty big track position advantage on him and he overcame it. We'll go back to work and hopefully we can keep up with him next time and give the fans an even better show."

Barker capitalized on the late-race restart to take third place and keep the championship battle close. The performance also gives him confidence entering the Oxford 250 and the season finale over the next three weeks.

"Those cautions definitely helped us at the end there," said Barker. "I'm pumped for the 250. Whatever happens in two weeks or three weeks happens. Thanks to the fans, everybody."

Farrington finished fourth, with T.J. Brackett rounding out the top five.

The 53rd Annual Nitro Trailers Oxford 250 is scheduled for August 28-30. Fans can watch the Oxford 250 live on RacingAmerica.TV.