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"HOMETOWN" DOWNS BROTHERS LOOK FOR PODIUM SUCCESS AS CHAMPIONSHIP BATTLE HEATS UP

ELKHART LAKE, WISCONSIN (August 16, 2010) – Antonio Downs looks to close the Championship gap at his hometown track, while point leader Charlie Shears hopes to put the disappointments of Lime Rock behind him in Rounds 10 and 11 of the Cooper Tires Prototype Lites Championship in the Time Warner Cable Road Race Showcase at Road America.

As the "Downs Boys" (which include brothers Matt and Lucas) hail from Butterfield, Minnesota, Road America is the closest thing they have to a home track. So Antonio, driver of the #4 Eurosport Racing/Lamex Foods Élan DP02 in Lites 1, has set the expectation bar at "high" for the weekend.

"I grew up going to this track every year to watch my Dad race. He used to race a lot of different cars from Spec Racers, to Corvettes, to Shelby Can-Am. We have a lot of great memories from Elkhart - it is my favorite track far and away. My expectations are nothing short of an all Downs podium. That has been a goal of ours for quite some time and to do it on our home track would be perfect. "

Shears (#21 Inspire Motorsports/US Builders) maintains a 14-point lead in the Championship over Downs but knows he is at a disadvantage this weekend.

"I love the track," said Shears, "but it is going to be tough because of the Downs brothers and folks like my teammate Gary Gibson - these guys know the track like it's the back of their hand, so it's going to be tough to get up front. Road America has something for everyone; long fast straights, tight turns and sweeping high speed turns. It's a track not for the faint of heart. I am looking forward to the weekend - hopefully our outcome will be different than at Lime Rock."

Lites 2 Championship leader Lee Alexander (#23 Factory 48 Motorsports/APE Raceparts), a rookie to the series, is fairly new to Road America as well. Like most drivers, he's looking for creative ways to figure out the track – in a hurry.

"Between YouTube videos and (the racing simulator game) rFactor, I can at least learn the way the turns go, then I guess I'll just work up to it on the test day," said Alexander. "I have been on Road America only once before – it's such a pleasure to drive. It's fast fast fast! I love the way the course flows and the way it travels through tree-lined straights and elevations. It really feels like you're going somewhere!"

Shears' road to the Championship literally took a hit in Round 9 at Lime Rock last month, as he was struck from behind in turn one of lap one by none other than teammate Jonathan Bennett (#54 Inspire Motorsports/ Composite Resources). The subsequent damage left him in the pit lane for four laps while the team replaced the rear wing. Shears was happy to return to the track at all.

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“Lime Rock was a heart breaker,” said Shears. “We felt that we had a very fast car and over the last two years we have done well when we had a healthy car. After taking the damaged body work off and somehow replacing the wing with very little support to it, we were able to get the car out on the track. My hat is off to my crew, they did a great job.”

Downs also had his share of adventures at Lime Rock, where the teams dealt with rainy conditions all through practice and a dry – albeit humid – race day.

“I think it was tough for all the teams to come to grips with setup since we really didn't have any dry track time before qualifying,” said Downs. “I only did a few laps in qualifying so I was trying to figure out all the braking points and gears on the fly. My brothers Matt and Lucas were really fast but had problems with their cars during the race. I got to race with both of them for the first half of the race and it was a ton of fun. I picked up some good points on Shears so it was a great weekend for me.”

A promoter test day is scheduled for Thursday, with practice sessions Friday at 9:20 am and 1:20 pm and qualifying for Round 10 at 9:35 am on Saturday. The green flag will drop for Round 10 Saturday at 5:20 pm and on Round 11 at 12:45 pm Sunday.

Road America celebrated its Golden Anniversary in 2005, 50 years after the track was first carved out of 525 acres of Wisconsin farmland. Many improvements have been made throughout the years, but the original 4.048-mile, 14-turn configuration has never been altered.

The Cooper Tires Prototype Lites Championship features racing between two sports racer prototype classes, Lites 1 and Lites 2, presenting a dimension of competition as drivers must be aware of classes with distinctly different speeds as they navigate the race track. This is the same challenge faced by the drivers of the American Le Mans Series presented by Tequila Patrón.

The Championship continues next weekend, August 27 – 29, with Rounds 12 and 13 at the Mobil 1 Presents the Grand Prix of Mosport. Follow along on the race weekend at www.litestiming.com, on Facebook and Twitter, and visit www.prototypeelites.com for the latest schedule and updates.

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