

Sterling Marlin still winning races at 60 years old

By Phillip Prichard, MSA

Sterling Marlin, eight days after celebrating his 60th birthday, won the Pro Late Model 100-lap race at Fairgrounds Speedway Nashville on July 15.

Marlin, a Columbia, Tennessee resident, won his first Daytona 500 when he was 36 in 1994. He won at Daytona again in 1995, and in 1996 won the Talladega 500.

What made this victory even more special was that it came on the night the Speedway was celebrating its 60th anniversary with Throwback and Past Champion Night. Including Marlin, 20 past champions were at the track.

Marlin and Mark Day (2006), however, were the only former champions in the 25-car field.

"I still enjoy it," said Marlin, who is tied for third in the point standings in the Pro Late Model division for the season. "Everything about it. Working on them, hanging bodies, making them go fast. I still like figuring out what's going to make us run better and then the start of the race and everything that goes on during it. I enjoy it all as much as I ever did."

Marlin retired from NASCAR Cup racing in 2009 and returned to the Fairgrounds where in 1976 he made his first NASCAR

start at the age of 16.

He was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2012, but hasn't even allowed that to slow him down.

The victory was Marlin's first at the Fairgrounds since 2013, but he has been in contention in several races over the last two seasons.

He finished first in a race in August last season, but failed to pass the post-race inspection and was disqualified.

That's why the last race served as a breakthrough for Marlin.

"Before we were running a steel head motor. It was fast, but it was burning the tires off the front," Marlin said. "We would run good for about 60 laps and have a big lead, but everybody would catch up to us toward the end because we didn't have any tires left."

Marlin switched to a crate motor this season, which has preserved his tires and helped him hold off the field.

Marlin said he would be at the starting line "raring to go" for the next race at the Nashville Fairgrounds.

Called the Greatest Short Track in the Nation, check out the Fairgrounds Speedway Nashville at <http://www.fairgroundsspeedwaynashville.com/>.



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