

Melbourne's Eaton claims rare SCCA Triple Crown

Monday, 20 October 2008

Melbourne's Mark Eaton put his name in the sports car racing record books Sunday, winning his class in the Sports Car Club of America National Championship Runoffs at Heartland Park in Topeka, Kan., and in the process capturing the coveted Triple Crown.

Eaton, who drives for Melbourne's RobinsonMotorSports, won his second straight SCCA Formula Enterprise National Championship, and combined with his victory in the Formula Enterprise race Sunday and in the June Sprints, he became the first Brevard County resident to win the Triple Crown.

"It feels awesome," Eaton said.

Sunday's victory didn't come easy for Eaton, team manager at RobinsonMotorSports.

"I botched the start," he said. "I got on the gas at the right time, but I hit the rev limiter and once you hit the rev limiter it's like hitting the brake. That allowed Nick Evans to slip up on the inside. I set my sights on Nick Evans. I slowly reeled him in and coming up on the front straight, he bobbed just a little bit, and I had a good run and got a draft and (got) by him going into Turn 1."

Eaton won eight races this season in the spec series in which the open-wheel cars are powered by 2.3-liter inline, 170-horsepower Mazda 4-cylinder engines.

Eaton next will race in an event in Willow Springs, Calif., in December, for all national champion Mazda drivers. A victory there will provide him with a race ready Mazda MX5 for use in the MX5 Playboy Cup Series. He also plans to run in the SCCA Southeast National points competition in 2009.

Fort Myers' Mathew Inge also competed in Formula Enterprise for Robinson, finishing seventh, while Melbourne's Hector De La Torriente, the 2007 Southeast Division Regional Champion, finished eighth in Sunday's Spec Ford race for Robinson -- rallying from 23rd to eighth after getting spun out. De La Torriente finished his inaugural national season seventh in Southeast Division points with one podium and three top-5 finishes.

Spec Ford racers are closed-wheel, open-cockpit cars powered by 105-horsepower 1.9-liter fuel-injected 4-cylinder engines.

De La Torriente's race will be broadcast on SPEED TV at noon Wednesday, Nov. 26, while Eaton's championship race will be shown at 1 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 28, also on SPEED.

Several local racers will compete in the American Road Race of Champions Nov. 5-9 at Road Atlanta. The race determines the national champion for SCCA regional class cars.

Indialantic's David Ellis-Brown has entered his Volkswagen Jetta, and Cocoa Beach's Deuce Keane has entered his Honda Accord, both in the Improved Touring B class.

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