

Merchants Bank 150 To Open Thunder Road's 46th Season

For Immediate Release

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Waterbury, VT – Officials from Thunder Road Int'l Speedbowl are pleased to announce the return of Merchants Bank for the 7th Annual Merchants Bank 150 on Sunday, May 1. The Merchants Bank 150 is the second event on the 2005 schedule for the ACT Late Model Tour, and will open Thunder Road's 46th season of stock car racing.

Since its inaugural running in 1999, the Merchants Bank 150 has quickly become one of the most prestigious events at the Barre, VT oval, and has also seen great side-by-side action from the regular NAPA Tiger Sportsman, Allen Lumber Street Stock, and PowerShift Junkyard Warrior divisions in recent memory.

"Merchants Bank is proud to be presenting the 7th Annual Merchants Bank 150 to open the season once again at Thunder Road," said Tom Leavitt, Senior Vice President of Retail Banking. "This event has seen some terrific action on the track in the past six years. The 150-lap feature gives race fans a great introduction to the year and tests the teams right out of the garage. This is family entertainment at its finest and we look forward to building upon a tradition that is one of the highlights of spring."

Jean-Paul Cyr of Milton, VT began defense of his 2003 ACT Late Model Tour Championship with a win in last year's Merchants Bank 150, and used the momentum from the win to capture a second-consecutive title. Cyr also won the event in 2002. Northfield, VT's Cris Michaud parlayed a 5th-place finish in the 2004 Merchants Bank 150 into his second career Thunder Road Late Model Championship later in the season. Merchants Bank has signed on to support Michaud's efforts toward another "King of the Road" crown in 2005.

Former winners of the Merchants Bank 150 include Milton, VT's Scott Dragon (2003), Kenny Dufour of Bethlehem, NH (2001), Tracie Bellerose of Gorham, NH (2000), and Phil Scott of Middlesex, VT, the inaugural winner in

1999. "Our past champions have included some outstanding drivers," Leavitt noted, "and we're looking forward to a great day of racing as these teams are joined by the stars of all of Thunder Road's divisions for what will be an action-packed, green flag afternoon."

Merchants Bank is a full-service, commercial bank offering a complete range of retail and commercial services to businesses, industry, private and government institutions, and individuals. Merchants Bank maintains 35 full-service banking offices and three additional ATM-only locations throughout Vermont. To learn more, visit www.merchantsbankvt.com.

The ACT Late Model Tour kicks off its 14th season at Lee USA (NH) Speedway on Sunday, April 24. The full schedule can be found at www.acttour.com. The Merchants Bank 150 is the first of 19 events for Thunder Road's 2005 season, which will conclude on Sunday, October 2 with the 42nd Annual New England Dodge Dealers Milk Bowl. For more information about "The Nation's Site of Excitement", call (802) 244-6963, or log on to www.thunderroadspeedbowl.com.

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