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Pittsburgh, PA January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013 -The Bilstein Modified Lite STARS Tour made giant strides for the small car world in 2012. It saw increases in virtually every statistical category, including the number of sanctioned events (+17), sanctioned speedways (+34), national events (+2), and participating drivers (+55). Purses and prizes increased as well. And, with the addition of five new regions for 2013, it looks like the organization will have another record-breaking year.

The Modified Lite STARS organization was formed to restore much-needed stability to this brand of racing and to reverse the downward trend that it was experiencing. For a number of years, the field of Modified Lite racing was dominated by Team USA (TUSA), a sanctioning body created and maintained by Walt Breeding, who was instrumental in launching this class. Indeed, it was under his leadership that the cars shed the politically *incorrect* Dwarf Car name and they adopted body panels resembling those of their Big Block Modified brothers. While TUSA continues to exist (for example, it still sanctions the Modified Lite portion of East Bay Raceway Park's Winternationals), there was very little else happening on the TUSA docket. As a result, interest in these cars began to drop. Fields were shrinking and rules packages were starting to become inconsistent. This gave the racers fewer opportunities to showcase their skills on a higher and more level platform.

Despite the sagging performance of the class nationally, several areas remained strong. One was the Western PA/Ohio/West Virginia area, which was operating under the STARS moniker. To the north, the New York DWARF Car Association, a New York/Canadian group, led the way. Another area of strength was Delaware, an historic hotbed of Modified Lite racing.

In 2006, Bill Bauer, a former competitor in the class, partnered with Canadian Bruce Mason to launch the Modified Lite STARS International Championship Tour. The STARS program has gained widespread acceptance. The organization adopted a set of standardized rules, although some regional deviations are acknowledged. And, even when some track or region has not signed on to the program, the STARS model has become a guide for pockets of localized Modified Lite racing.

The cornerstone of the International Modified Lite STARS program is the national event concept. In 2012, five tracks hosted nationals, which brought together top drivers from around the country to compete for top purses. The points awarded for these events, coupled with a racer's accomplishments in his or her home region, resulted in a national champion.

Joshua May, an Iowa driver, took the top honors in the Heartland region and was the National Champion as well. May won three of the prestigious national events, scoring at Merritville Speedway and Mercer Raceway Park in addition to his home track, 34 Raceway in West Burlington, IA. Shane Clements and Mike Ryan were victorious in the other two national events staged at Houston Raceway Park and Canyon Speedway, respectively.

Closer to home, Mike Hay, of Somerset, was the regional champion for the tough Mid-Atlantic West region, while Delaware regular Tim White was the Mid-Atlantic East titleholder. Derek Wagner won the North title, while Bryan Henry (Texas), Scott Domine (South West) and Chase Flatt (Mid West) were other regional winners.

For 2013, the organization is looking to expand its footprint. There will be a Rocky Mountain, Pacific Rim, Southeast Sunbelt, Northwest/Arctic and New England regions added, if all goes according to plans. There will still be five national events on tap. A schedule will be released soon.