



## RIVERHEAD WATCH

# Soper: Graduation to racing

BY WILL SAMMON

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Kyle Soper stopped just short of calling this the best weekend of his life.

"It's pretty cool and really great, I'll say that much," Soper said. "We'll see what happens [tonight]."

The Manorville resident graduated yesterday from Eastport-South Manor High School. Instead of partying with peers the following night to celebrate the milestone, he'll compete at Riverhead Raceway in the 30-lap legends race car feature event, which precedes the Hoosier Tire 200, the fifth of 14 races on the 2014 NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour schedule.

"Even if the graduation was Saturday morning, I still would've went and raced," said Soper, who will attend Suffolk CC and would like to become a police officer. "That's what's most important to me. It's something I've always loved and enjoyed with family and friends."

Soper has one win this season and three straight second-place finishes. He moved into first in the legends standings last week with 320 points.

"I just got more comfortable with the car," said Soper, who started racing when he was 7. "We were always fast; I just was never in the right place at the right time. Last year, we got a brand-new car and we really figured the car out and it was just like a rocket ship from then."

Of interest to Soper and many other young drivers, Riverhead will host the Hoosier Tire 200 today. Ryan Preece, who lives in Berlin, Connecticut, but competes weekly at Riverhead, won the race last year.

While Timmy Solomito (Islip) and Howie Brode (East Islip) are two local favorites, Soper said he would like to use the night as a showcase of sorts. Many modified owners and sponsors are expected to be in attendance and Soper would like to impress them.

Many have made the transition from legends to modified. Kyle Ellwood, a Riverhead champion in the legends division, earned his first career NASCAR Modified victory last Saturday at Riverhead and will be in the Hoosier 200. Soper would like to follow suit someday soon.

"Next year or the year after, I'd like to move up to modifieds," Soper said. "Because I've done well this year, people have came up to me and talked with me, so we'll see what it brings."

### Modified standings

Through June 21

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|-------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Howie Brode, East Islip    | 197 |
| 2. Tom Rogers Jr., Riverhead  | 170 |
| 3. Ryan Preece, Berlin, Conn. | 160 |
| 4. David Sapienza, Riverhead  | 151 |
| 5. Timmy Solomito, Islip      | 147 |

### Saturday

Featured racing starts at 6:30 p.m.: Hoosier Tire 200 NASCAR Whelen Modified Flash Tour (time trials), chargers, 30-lap blunderbusts (time trials), 30-lap legends (time trials).