

They call him an outlaw, but the dictionary definition of an “outlaw” is; a) a fugitive from the law, b) a habitual criminal, c) a rebel, d) a social outlaw.

Eddie MacDonald is none of these things, and yet the word “outlaw” seems to have become his nickname in the last several years.

Clearly the term “outlaw” comes from his tendency to race anything, anywhere, anytime. Be it a go kart, ACT Late Model, Camping World East car, Whelen Modified, PASS Pro Stock, NASCAR Nationwide Series Car, Camping World Series Truck or anything else, Eddie MacDonald is a racer at heart.

Having parents like Red and Judy MacDonald, who own a racetrack, (New Hampshire’s Lee USA Speedway) helps encourage a young kid to go into racing, but it doesn’t guarantee that he will become a racer. Despite his parent’s financial success, Eddie’s racing career has never been handed to him. No silver spoons here, people.

For MacDonald, his driving career began at age 7, when he raced go karts at the family’s track. By 15 he was racing in the Hobby Stock division at Lee and moved up to the track’s Late Model division when he was 17. Eddie won numerous races with a Late Model and finished 2nd in the track’s championship points standings three years in a row.

In 2001 Eddie’s first start was in the then-named Busch North Series (now called Camping World East Series). A 19<sup>th</sup> place finish in points that first year was good for the low-budget team, but not great. Still, it was a big step for the ragtag gang to be racing in New England’s premier racing series at the time.

"We didn't have a lot of money so what we did have we had to do to spend wisely," MacDonald says of their Busch North days. "There were a lot of things we went without, but we wanted to race in the series and do well, so we worked hard and did the best we could."

A win came in 2002 at Beech Ridge, Maine followed by a win again in 2005. While obviously underfunded, it became clear to other teams that MacDonald was at least a threat to win the races he was in. In addition to running all of the Busch North races in those years, Eddie also raced in other series. The “outlaw” label began to stick.

It was during 2005 that Eddie hooked up with Rollie LaChance, a legendary

New England crew chief known for his work with Tracy Gordon, among others. The pairing was a perfect fit. "He was the only guy I really wanted to get as a crew chief," MacDonald says. "He always had fast cars and had been around for a long time, and I just knew that if we could get hooked up together, we'd be able to win some races."

In 2006 the arrest of the team's part-owner and backer put Eddie's racing career in jeopardy. MacDonald continued racing but did so out of the checkbooks of himself and the same people he had always trusted around him, including crew chief Rollie LaChance. Funding of the team came from longtime friends and supporters of MacDonald as well as a host of contingency sponsors. Every dollar helped. Race winnings went back into the team and kept them going from race to race. When MacDonald could not afford to buy new equipment they borrowed, bartered or built their own to get by.

2007 brought another win and it became clear that the pairing of Rollie LaChance and Eddie MacDonald was stronger than whatever financial concerns would hound them.

It was also during the 2007 season that Robert Grimm, the owner of a large construction company in Pennsylvania gave MacDonald a huge financial boost. Grimm bought one of MacDonald's cars, and then asked MacDonald if he would continue to drive it.

Grimm, who had previously been involved in dirt racing, gave MacDonald the financial and equipment backing that allowed Eddie to concentrate more on each race instead of worrying how to make it from race to race. Besides the Camping World East Series races, Grimm also supported MacDonald's ACT and other racing ventures.

"We connected with Eddie and Rollie right away," Grimm said. "He's an awesome driver. When the time comes to get up on the wheel, he just gets it done. He's just an all-around nice guy."

2008 became the breakout year for MacDonald, as he scored wins in both Camping World East Series races at New Hampshire Motor Speedway. He finished 7<sup>th</sup> in points (the highest ranking of his career) and continued to race with ACT and PASS as well. The addition of Grimm as car owner and LaChance as crew chief was now helping Eddie achieve the success he knew he was capable of.

For 2009 the Eddie's schedule would be the usual mix of Camping World East, ACT, PASS and even a Whelen Modified and Nationwide Series start. The team would race where the money was and put the winnings back into the race team.

MacDonald and his team entered the season not having enough money to run all of the Camping World East Series races. Their plan was to finish well enough that they would earn the money to keep going. Their plan worked, and as the season progressed Eddie found himself in the very thick of the Camping World East Series point chase. While a win didn't come until September at NHMS, the season-long top 5's and top 10's kept him in the hunt for the championship right until the end. MacDonald eventually lost the championship to Ryan Truex by 34 points, but just being in the championship fight was a great accomplishment for the driver and his team. Beating out series teams with Cup affiliations showed that there was still room in the series for "the little guy."

2009 also brought two career highlights outside of the Camping World East Series. In July MacDonald won the Oxford 250 in convincing fashion. "Just a huge race, because there is so much history behind it," MacDonald said of the 250. "It used to be a race where all of the big-name drivers would run it, not just local guys. With all of the big names that accompany this tradition, it just means a lot to be part of that." Winning the Oxford 250 also added nearly \$33,000 to the team's racing funds and allowed them to continue racing for the rest of the year.

Two months later MacDonald also won the inaugural ACT Invitational at NHMS. The historic win came in a weekend where he had raced in the Camping World East Series, Whelen Modified and ACT races, winning two of the events he entered. The two wins in two different series at NHMS proved the secret to MacDonald's success was the driver, not just the car.

The relationship between MacDonald and LaChance is not a conventional one, but it works for them. "When I first started working with him," LaChance says, "it was pretty hard to get a read on how the car was handling because he doesn't complain about anything. But we have a good idea now on how to read each other. He doesn't mind being talked to, but he doesn't talk a whole lot. As a person, he's pretty low key. As a driver, he's respectful of other racers and his own equipment. He takes it as it comes, but he can take it up on the wheels if he needs to. I have had a number of great drivers

and Eddie certainly ranks right up there with any of them. I won't say he is the best because I don't want him to get a swelled head. We get along great and we really think alike, so it works out well. He can drive anything and just keeps going. It is a lot of fun to be racing together."

Despite the money and resources of Robert Grimm, the team is certainly not on par financially with others in the Camping World East Series. "Things are easier now, but with all the big money we battle against it seems we are always struggling" MacDonald says. "That just makes us more determined. We don't have a big sponsor but we have a lot of people willing to help and we make the most of what we have and we have to work harder than anyone else, but you see it can be done. It is amazing how many people have stepped up to help us. I can't thank them enough."

"I would love to make it to either the Camping World Truck Series or the Nationwide Series, which is the next two levels above in the direction of the Sprint Cup Series," MacDonald says. "I would love to climb that ladder, but without sponsorship these days, it's tough. Hopefully, someday it will all happen."

Until then, MacDonald will continue to be the nicest outlaw you'll ever meet.