

Eric Howard crowned IRWIN Industrial Tools® Ultimate Tradesman

PHOENIX, AZ - (November 12, 2008) The 2008 search for the Ultimate Tradesman concluded this past weekend when IRWIN Industrial Tools® crowned Eric Howard their 2008 Ultimate Tradesman. Howard, a general contractor from Concord, California with 19 years experience, bested four other professional tradesmen to take home the coveted title and a treasure trove of cash and prizes.

"I can't believe I won!" exclaimed an amazed Howard. "So many professional tradesmen entered, to think I was the fastest and most accurate among that group is amazing. This has been a great experience and I would like to thank everyone at IRWIN® for putting on this contest, they have been great throughout the entire event."

IRWIN Industrial Tools®, a Newell-Rubbermaid® company, has been searching for the Top Tradesman since March in the second annual Ultimate Tradesman Challenge. The competition is a timed event in which participants compete using an IRWIN® STRAIT-LINE chalk reel, IRWIN® tape measure and SPEEDBOR® Max wood boring bit to mark, measure and drill as quickly and accurately as possible.

Following its success of the 2007 competition in the U.S., IRWIN® extended the 2008 competition internationally and broadened the search to include Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This year over 10,000 tradesmen competed in 200 local events in 37 U.S. states, four Canadian provinces, Australia and New Zealand.

Howard won the North America finals with a qualifying time of 23:88 seconds, winning a Roush Performance Supercharged Stage III Ford F-150 valued at over \$60,000, a 600 square-foot IRWIN Ultimate Garage by Allied Steel Buildings and a year's supply of Dickies® work gear.

Following the North America finals, he defeated Nathan Vander Wielen, the South Pacific finalist from Eaton, Australia, in a head-to-head competition for the worldwide title. Eric posted a time of 22.89 seconds, while Vander Wielen could only muster a 24.07 second effort. With the victory Howard took home an additional \$20,000 after selecting bag number 23 from the 26 IRWIN® tool bags on stage with him. In each bag were various cash values, including \$1.26 million.

"The participation and passion among this year's Ultimate Tradesman Challenge contestants has been truly impressive," said Eric Rich, director of marketing for IRWIN Industrial Tools®. "IRWIN Industrial Tools® is proud to recognize Eric for his accomplishments and for trusting that the high performing, innovative hand tools and power tool accessories from IRWIN® will deliver winning results on the job, each and every day."

Prior to the start of the final competitions, NASCAR star Jamie McMurray was on-hand for a special presentation. Neil Eibeler, President of Construction Accessories, presented a check for \$10,000 to the Jamie McMurray Foundation. The donation was in honor of each of the 10,000 participants in this year's competition. The Jamie McMurray Foundation is a non-profit organization that raises funds for research, education and support of individuals and families afflicted with autism.

"Autism awareness is something that's very important to me," said McMurray. "The foundation continues to raise funds and awareness in the fight to find a cure. With donations like this one from IRWIN Industrial Tools® and all the tradesmen that participated we can help families who are affected by autism."

The IRWIN Industrial Tools® Ultimate Tradesman Challenge is another example of the company's commitment to its distributor partners and end-users. IRWIN® is constantly striving to make the end-user experience more productive and efficient through the development of hand tools and power tool accessories with meaningful innovation and performance.

For more information on the Ultimate Tradesman Challenge and details on the 2009 competition please visit, www.irwinchallenge.com.

About IRWIN Industrial Tools

IRWIN Industrial Tools manufactures and distributes professional grade hand tools and power tool accessories worldwide for trade professionals who demand superior performance and durability on the job. IRWIN Industrial Tools' brand portfolio features user-preferred category leaders such as IRWIN®, VISE-GRIP® locking tools, MARATHON® circular saw blades, QUICK-GRIP® clamping tools, SPEEDBOR® flat bits, STRAIT-LINE® marking tools, Unibit® step drill bits and HANSON® taps and dies. IRWIN Industrial Tools is a Newell Rubbermaid company. For more information about IRWIN's line of hand tools and power tool accessories, call 1-800-GO IRWIN or visit www.irwin.com.

About Roush Fenway Racing

Roush Fenway Racing operates 13 full-time motorsports teams, five in NASCAR Sprint Cup with drivers Jamie McMurray, Matt Kenseth, Greg Biffle, Carl Edwards and David Ragan; four in the Nationwide Series with Kenseth, Biffle, Edwards, McMurray, Ragan, Erik Darnell and Colin Braun; three in the Craftsman Truck Series with Darnell, Braun, Kvapil, Bobby East and John Wes Townley; and one in ARCA RE/MAX Series with Ricky Stenhouse, Jr. For more information on any of the Roush Fenway

EVES TOWNEY, AND ONE IN AN IRVON INDYCAR SERIES WITH NICKY GHERMOUSE, JR. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ANY OF THE ROUSH FENWAY RACING TEAMS, LOG ONTO www.RoushFenway.com. FOR SPONSORSHIP INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT ROBIN JOHNSON AT 704-720-4645.

Additional assets available online:  [Photos \(1\)](#)

<https://irwin.mediaroom.com/2008-11-12-Eric-Howard-crowned-IRWIN-Industrial-Tools-R-Ultimate-Tradesman>