

Triumphs on the Track

Enthusiasts vie at Road America for the coveted Kastner Cup

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHAWN FRANK

Four miles of black magic. Those are the words Joe Alexander, one of the founding members of Friends of Triumph, used to describe Road America. For those who don't know of Road America, it is a top-tier race track that holds some famous and largely known races like the SCCA Runoffs, American Le Mans Series racing, and Rolex Series racing, among others. It's a 4.048-mile road course with 14 turns and high-speed straights. It first opened in 1955, following years of racing in the streets of nearby Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. The first race, in 1950, was a 3.3-mile road course, and in 1951 and 1952 the circuit was 6.5 miles on the two-lane roads and highways winding through the village and into the countryside. The barricaded streets, painted lines on the pavement and strategically placed hay bales were part of the feel.

In time, it moved from the village roads to a state-of-the-art facility that attracted more and more people each year. Designers created one of the longest and most challenging road courses in the world, designed around the topography of the land, with rolling hills and glacial terrain. Drivers love to take it on, and spectators love to take it in. Race enthusiasts, and even celebrities like Tom Cruise and Michael Jordan, have been known to attend races there. It's no secret that the late Paul Newman thought it was one of the greatest courses in the world.

Every year, the Elkhart Lake Vintage Festival attracts enthusiasts from all over the United States and around the world. In 2013, it coincided with The Kastner Cup, an annual race for Triumphs and Triumph-powered cars. The Vintage Sports Car Drivers Association (VSCDA) keeps track of scoring, timing, and regulations, but the event is organized and operated by the Friends of Triumph, an elite group of Triumph historians who keep these cars

where they belong, in competition. The Kastner Cup started in 2003 in Ontario, Canada, at Mosport International Raceway. It was started to honor Triumph competition royalty. For those of you unfamiliar with Triumph history, Kas Kastner is one of the main reasons Triumphs are known for their competition back story.

Kas was a well-known production car driver in the late 1950s, a class champion for the California Sports Car Club, and Sports Car Club of America Champion in 1959 in a Triumph. He was chief instructor for the California Sports Car Club, and national licensing chairman for the SCCA. His experience with performance parts is second to none, even to this day. He not only raced Triumphs, he convinced the Triumph executives to allow a works racing team sponsored by the factory to showcase Triumph cars. He figured the exposure at the tracks and competitions that these cars received would ultimately result in sales. They granted his wish after some rearranging, and made him head of the U.S. Competition Department for the Triumph factory in the early 1960s. He led the team to victory after victory, nationally and internationally. His racing career was very successful, and he was equally successful in team management, as well as writing a series of model-specific preparation handbooks and articles that have been used by enthusiasts for years now. It seems to fit that this annual event would be deemed the Kastner Cup.

The Kastner Cup has been held at different tracks every year, giving participants convenient access and variety, no matter where they live in the U.S. or abroad. Tracks like Watkins Glen, Road Atlanta and Laguna Seca have been some of the venues for this prestigious event. This year was Road America's turn.

The grid consisted of four TR3s, 13



Kastner Cup entrants—including Bill Babcock's Peyote Special, left—joined other vintage racers at Road America.



PHOTO COURTESY KEN KNIGHT

TR4s, two TR4As, two TR250s, three TR6s, four Spitfires, four GT6s, a TR8, a Peyote MKII Special, a Devin bodied TR4, and a TVR 2200S, all strikingly beautiful and race-specific. (Among the TR250s was the TR250K, a Peter Brock- and Kas Kastner-designed beauty that started in the back of the field even though he qualified for the front row—a very gentlemanly gesture.) Watching them tear around the track made it easy to see how much these drivers love racing these vintage examples of form and function. Some were faster than others, of course, but the Kastner Cup is not won based on track performance alone.

Fifty percent of the choice is based on track performance, with 25 percent based on car presentation, and 25 percent on exemplifying the spirit of vintage racing.

The decision in its entirety is made by Kas Kastner himself. No one can win the trophy two years in a row, and the previous year's winner must relinquish the trophy for the next winner to receive.

As a silence swept over the garage, the crowd anxiously awaited the announcement by Kas himself on the winner. He held up the silver trophy bearing past winners' names, saying, "It is my distinct pleasure to present this year's Kastner Cup winner with this trophy. It was a very difficult decision, as usual. This person deserves this trophy. I present to you the winner of the 2013 Kastner Cup, Ken Knight in his '64 Triumph TR4!"

The camaraderie among this group was blatantly apparent as they all congratulated Ken. As they cleared a path, Ken walked up



ABOVE: Peter Bulkowski's Triumph TR8's roar echoed off the rolling hills.

RIGHT: Dennis Delap screams up the straight in his Triumph TR4-powered TVR 2200S.



ABOVE: Sam Halkias tears up the track in his Triumph TR6.

RIGHT: Ken Knight, in green, receiving the coveted Kastner Cup from Kas Kastner.



ABOVE: Side by side racing between Jerry Barker in his Triumph Spitfire and Mark Wheatley in his Triumph TR4.

LEFT: Ken Knight in the Kastner Cup-winning Triumph TR4.

RIGHT: (from left) Joe Alexander, Peg Kastner, Charlotte McGuire, Kas Kastner, Chuck McGuire and Shawn Frank.

Results

1st	Peter Bulkowski, 1977 TR8
2nd	Sam Halkias, 1971 TR6
3rd	Tony Garmey, 1967 TR250K
4th	Bill Babcock, 1959 Peyote MKII Special
5th	Ken Knight, 1964 TR4

FASTEST LAP, BY MODEL

TR8	Peter Bulkowski	2:39
TR6	Sam Halkias	2:40
Peyote Special	Bill Babcock	2:44
TR4	Ken Knight	2:48
Spitfire	Jerry Barker	2:49
TR250	Leo Oddi	2:50
GT6	Clark Lincoln	2:53
TR3	Andrew Willms	2:59

Awarded by Snook's Dream Cars of Bowling Green, Ohio

and shook Kas's hand, smiling from ear to ear. He made a short speech and looked at the trophy with a sense of accomplishment. A great moment to witness.

If you have a chance to catch a Kastner Cup race, you will not be disappointed. The competition, the camaraderie, the displays of gentlemanly racing excellence, and, of course, the artistic beauty and sound of historic and vintage race cars will almost be sensory overload. Prepare yourself and soak it all in, because you will be addicted. I wouldn't say that is a bad thing.

This year's Kastner Cup will be held May 16-18 at Eagles Canyon Raceway in Denton, Texas. See you there. 🌐

Shawn Frank is the editor of *Spitfire & GT6 Magazine*.