

Kersey returns to the winner's circle in Wisconsin



The starting grid at Road America

Thursday July 1st, 2010. Story by Ed Sutcliff

The Road America course in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin was the site of this week's Red Sox Racing League, "Cut the Cheese Grand Prix". The 4.048 mile 14 corner track is carved out of a scenic 525 acre plot of flat farmland nestled between the Crystal and Little Elkhart lakes. The course is both fast and technically challenging. Twenty-two RSR drivers arrived at the track to prepare for the 28 lap, 113 mile event. Twenty-one of them had one thing on their minds; ending Les Turner's incredible streak of victories.

Despite his recent history, knowledgeable fans had their money on Darren Kersey as the driver most likely to give Turner a run for his money. Kersey entered the race in the midst of a stretch of bad luck which would have forced lesser men to consider retirement. Knocking the dust off of his helmet, Kersey devised a plan to return to the winner's circle by arriving at the track several days early so he could get more practice in before the race. His effort paid off. Kersey not only earned the pole for the race, he went on to lead every lap of the event as he cruised to a comfortable six second lead over Turner's 2nd place car.

Kersey laid down a qualifying lap of 2:04.498 which was the only sub-2:05 lap recorded at the track in recent memory. Turner started in 2nd place with a lap of 2:05.285. Rows two through five were filled by Scott Husted (2:05.530), Terry McCuin (2:05.671), Ed Sutcliff (2:05.873), Jeff Thomas (2:06.154), Kevin Kyle (2:06.356), Jim Albertson (2:06.504), Michael Baley (2:06.648), and Andrew Feldman (2:06.649). Bill Hadden, David Holzwarth, Jeff Sharp, Jim Kepford, Divina Galica, Robert Magee, William Kabel, Bill Pawluckie, Robert Latuga, David Pyner, Chad Tracy, and Dennis Heaney completed the starting grid.

Lap one incidents proved costly to Thomas, Kyle, and Baley. Each was forced to pit for repairs before reaching the first corner. Baley retired from the race without returning to the track, but Thomas and Kyle were able to rejoin the action. In an impressive display of evasive driving, Sharp moved from 13th to 6th place as he deftly avoided the first lap carnage. Cool air temperatures and low humidity contributed to an electric atmosphere which eventually caused problems for several drivers. Magee and McCuin were both forced to park after ten laps.

Sutcliff almost suffered the same fate, but managed to keep his car on the track while his team scrambled to figure out what his car was doing. Tweaks and improvements normally achieved through analysis of data being transmitted from the car were not an option for Sutcliff until lap 13. Kyle's car never handled the same after his lap one damage, so despite a brave effort by the Indiana driver, his night ended when he was forced to park the car on lap 18. Kevin finished the race in 19th place. Pyner also had a good race, but exited the race on lap 19 en route to an 18th place finish.



The RSR drivers entering turn one

17th place was secured by Heaney as he climbed 5 positions while finishing two laps down to the leaders. Jeff Thomas (13th) led a pack of four cars who finished one lap down. Kabela (14th), Albertson (15th), and Hadden (16th) all battled hard to gain positions during the race, but Hadden's bad luck late in the race saw him give up two spots with seven laps remaining. Thomas gained a position on Kabela with one lap left in the race.

Pawluckie was the last driver remaining on the lead lap as he climbed six spots en route to a 12th place finish. Latuga finished just inches ahead of Pawluckie to earn 11th place. Kersey had a great view of their battle and complimented both drivers after the race. "I was trying to save my tires a bit at the end, so I had a great seat to watch Robert and Bill fight for those last several laps. They were both racing hard for the spot." Tracy earned 10th place after a scare on lap 20 which saw him lose valuable track position to the 9th place car of Kepford and the 8th place car of Galica.

Galica's crew gambled on spoiler settings before the race, a move which gave their driver significantly more speed on the long straights. 6th place finisher Holzwarth, followed Galica for eleven laps before he was able to make a pass. "Divi's car was fast tonight. I was driving the tires off the car trying to get past her." 7th place finisher Feldman, echoed the comments. "I never could concentrate on Sutcliff, because Holzwarth and Galica were hounding me the entire time."

Sutcliff finished in 5th place despite the car's electrical problems. "I got tagged in the rear spoiler early in the race. The damage might have knocked a piece of equipment loose because my car's data was not getting back to the garage until lap 13. Track officials have informed my crew chief they located an empty spectator seat between turns 5 - 6 on lap 12 which contained a sophisticated electronic jamming device.

They are testing it now to determine if it was transmitting on my team's frequency. If so, that would explain the problems we had. They don't know who owned the device, but there was an empty can of tuna next to the chair. I couldn't drive the car at 100% tonight because I didn't know how it would handle so a top-5 finish was a great result. Congratulations go out to Darren on his dominating victory tonight."

Jeff Sharp earned the "Hard Charger" award by finishing in 4th place after starting from the 13th position. "I was fortunate to avoid the mess on lap one. Our qualifying effort wasn't great, but the crew did a great job getting the car ready for the race."

Husted finished in 3rd place. Despite earning a spot on the podium, he described his race as having been fairly boring. "I qualified 3rd, and was pretty happy with that. I had a minor half spin on lap 8, dropped from 3rd to 4th, but then retook 3rd when McCuin was forced to retire. I had another spin on lap 16 when I accidentally double-shifted and ended up hitting the wall lightly with the nose. Luckily I did not damage the suspension. Once underway, the handling seemed fine so I carried on right in front of Jeff Sharp and was able to hang onto 3rd place for the remainder of the race without further incident. I was happy to bring the Hustedia.com (The Racing Historian) Android Mazda home to a podium finish."

Turner was happy with his 2nd place finish. "We knew that despite our string of victories which stretches back to the April 15th race at Watkins Glen, there are just too many talented drivers in this league for the run to continue forever. I had a very good setup tonight, but Darren was back to his old form and we just could not keep up with him. I am looking forward to the Tea and Crumpets Grand Prix at Silverstone next week."

Kersey's win signaled a renewed commitment by his team to get their driver back on the podium each week. "Fans might have forgotten about me given Turner's recent domination of the RSR events, but we had a stretch of nine consecutive podiums between November of 2009 and January of 2010. That string included five wins. I think this race might have been the thing we needed to get back into the points race."

RSR drivers travel to England for next week's race at the Silverstone Circuit.



Darren Kersey taking the checkered flag



Driver standings after Race 5 – Road America

Pts Pos	Chg	31 Drivers	Starts	Prov	Races Counted	Wins	T-5	T-10	Tot Pts	Bns Pts	Pen Pts	Laps	Incs	Beh Lead	Beh Next
1	-	Les Turner	5	0	5	4	5	5	574	20	1	237	1	-	-
2	+1	Ed Sutcliff	4	0	4	0	4	4	402	2	15	193	15	-172	-172
3	-1	Jeff Thomas	5	0	5	0	2	3	365	4	14	196	14	-209	-37
4	-	Chad Tracy	5	0	5	0	1	4	353	2	24	236	24	-221	-12
5	-	David Holzwarth	4	0	4	0	1	4	347	6	9	192	9	-227	-6
6	-	Andrew Feldman	4	0	4	0	1	4	305	2	17	206	17	-269	-42
7	+2	Jeff Sharp	4	0	4	0	1	3	274	2	18	154	18	-300	-31
8	-1	William Kabela	5	0	5	0	0	1	269	6	2	231	2	-305	-5
9	+6	Scott Husted	4	0	4	0	2	3	253	0	27	120	27	-321	-16
10	+8	Divina Galica	5	0	5	0	0	2	227	0	38	167	38	-347	-26
11	-	Jim Albertson	4	0	4	0	0	1	206	0	29	204	29	-368	-21
12	+5	Bill Pawluckie	4	0	4	0	0	1	204	0	26	198	26	-370	-2
13	-1	Bill Hadden	4	0	4	0	0	2	196	3	27	178	27	-378	-8
14	-6	Wilbur Gildersleeve Jr	2	0	2	0	1	2	194	4	0	135	0	-380	-2
15	-5	Barry Blocker	3	0	3	0	0	2	186	3	12	139	12	-388	-8
16	-3	Michael Baley	3	0	3	0	2	2	176	0	24	88	24	-398	-10
16	+10	Darren Kersey	4	0	4	1	1	1	176	6	20	98	20	-398	-
18	-4	Terry Mccuin	3	0	3	0	1	1	171	4	3	138	3	-403	-5
19	-3	Kevin Kyle	5	0	5	0	1	1	166	0	24	71	24	-408	-5
20	+3	Jim Kepford	2	0	2	0	0	2	160	2	2	58	2	-414	-6
20	+1	Robert Latuga	4	0	4	0	0	0	160	0	30	155	30	-414	-
22	-3	Tony Cook	2	0	2	0	0	0	135	2	2	129	2	-439	-25
23	-3	Robinson Shields	2	0	2	0	1	1	112	0	8	54	8	-462	-23
24	-2	Eric Porterfield	3	0	3	0	0	0	103	0	22	145	22	-471	-9
25	-	Kermit Gentry	3	0	3	0	0	0	91	0	14	43	14	-483	-12
26	-2	Robert Magee	2	0	2	0	1	1	86	0	9	45	9	-488	-5
27	-	David Pyner	4	0	4	0	0	0	64	0	41	79	41	-510	-22
28	-	Dennis Heaney	4	0	4	0	0	0	59	0	41	128	41	-515	-5
29	-	J. Paul Jones	3	0	3	0	0	0	47	0	18	21	18	-527	-12
30	-	Chris Templin	1	0	1	0	0	0	46	0	9	33	9	-528	-1
31	-	Mike Montesi	1	0	1	0	0	0	7	0	3	1	3	-567	-39