



History of the "Klash"

Back in the spring of 1993, Marty & Bobby Jones wanted to put together a Super Late Model spectacular that would rival any pavement race in the country. With many ideas from some of the sharpest minds in the business, the "Klash" was born, making this event the prize that hundreds of Midwest Late Model drivers would want to add to their racing resumes.

We have assembled this Klash history review, to show you some of the high profile names that have participated in the Klash over the fifteen-year history of this annual event. This year's chapter of Klash history promises to be yet another thriller with the Kalamazoo Speedway regulars ready to try and defend their turf against some very stout outsiders. Terry Senneker will be looking to join Andy Bozell as the only back-to-back Klash winner while Bozell himself will be going after his fifth Klash victory. Other Kalamazoo regulars expected to compete for the victory include former ARCA race winner Phil Bozell, 2008 Modified champion Brian Bergakker, multiple time Limited Late Model champion Brandon Lyons, 2008 Klash quick qualifier Steve Needles and 2008 Late Model Rookie of the Year Trent Hellenga. The outsiders will be headed up by Klash XI winner Tom Thomas as well as 2008 Klash Super Series champion and former NASCAR Nationwide Series competitor Joe Bush. Stan Perry Memorial winner Phil Massuch, former Summer Sizzler winner John Delayre, Klash III winner Brian Cloud, and three time CRA Super Series champion Scott Hantz are also among the early entries for Klash XVII. Former Late Model standout Gary Terry, Jack Landis and Andy Ponstein are also expected to be contenders for the victory. As you read below, you will see the who's who of racing, both in short track and Cup racing, as well as several drivers that raced at the Zoo, on their way up to the big leagues.

The First "Klash" was held August 18, 1993 in front of a record crowd. Among the 51 entries were ARCA champion Tim Steele, ASA stars Butch Miller, Glenn Allen Jr., and Joe Shear, Open Wheel Ace Gary Fedewa, and Lane Automotive owner Doug Lane. When the dust settled a new star emerged as Andy Bozell chased down and passed fan favorite Mike Vansparrentak to collect the \$10,000 cash prize.



"Klash II" saw another star-studded field that included a Wisconsin hot shoe named Matt Kenseth. The race itself was a classic duel that saw Andy Bozell and Dave Sensiba swap the lead eight times before Bozell used a lapped car to fend off a late challenge and collect his second straight 200 lap win.

"Klash III" featured NASCAR Stars Ken Schrader and Johnny Benson Jr. Gary Howe started things off, as he set fast time with a 12.925. Schrader charged from his 13th starting spot in the Sweet Mfg. house car to the lead at the halfway break. Perhaps the real story was the local driver of Brian Cloud, who had worked his way from 16th starting spot to second place, setting up the biggest upset in Kalamazoo Klash history. With less than 50 laps to go and Schrader fading, Cloud made his move to win his first ever feature at Kalamazoo Speedway.



Ken Schrader was back in 1996 to compete in **"Klash IV"** along with the addition of a mid-race break B-feature that was won by Plainwell's Donnie Breast. On a day that was plagued by rain, the skies finally opened up during the half way break and forced the completion of the race the following day. On Thursday half way leader Bob Holley picked up where he left off as he led a caution-free second half to win over Gary Terry and Bob Senneker.

After disappointing runs the previous two years Andy Bozell was back in form dominating **"Klash V"** leading 197 of the 200 laps to score his 3rd win in five starts. Rich Jackson had fast time with a 12.680, and Joe Bush won the B-feature.

In 1998 **"The Klash VI"** truly reached legendary status. It began with the two youngest entrants in the field. One was Ginger Phillips, 19 who sought to be the first female to compete in the event; the other was the fourth generation descendant of racing royalty, Adam Petty. The race itself saw Andy Bozell starting from the front row and trading the early lead between himself and Port City house car teammates Fred Campbell and Dave Sensiba. Meanwhile the show of the first half was the charge through the field by last row starters Mike Eddy and Butch Miller. In the Second Half, Bozell emerged from the pack and built a comfortable lead. With three laps to go a caution bunched up the field and set the stage for what was known as *"The Pass"*. On the restart Bozell quickly built a four car length lead and appeared for his fourth "Klash" win. Taking the white flag two length behind Bozell, Mike Vansparrentak made a bold charge to the outside of the track and exited turn two along side of the leader. As the crowd shot to their feet, Vansparrentak pulled even off of turn four and nosed ahead at the line to take the win by less than two feet! Mike Vansparrentak retired from driving at the end of 1998 season, what a way to end a great career.



"Klash VII" saw a standing room only crowd and a field large enough to require the first non-qualifiers "C" feature. The race itself came down to a three-way battle between former speedway champions Fred Campbell, Bob Holley, and Chris Orr. With less than 40 laps to remaining Orr made a slick move from third to the lead and held off Holley for the biggest win of his career.

"Klash VIII" saw the field swell to over 80 entrants and the second biggest upset in Klash History Todd Currier started in 14th and shot in to the top 5 behind leader Bob Holley at the mid-race break. The final segment saw Holley trading the lead with Rick Sexton before Butch Miller took charge on lap 138. With the tire wear becoming a problem for Miller, Currier, now of seven cylinders, slipped past with 18 laps to go to score the \$15,000 first prize.

"Klash IX" could only be described with one word, "HOT!" Mired in a record breaking heat wave, race day saw air temperatures pushing 100 degrees. John Delarye started from the pole and led all 100 laps of the first half to head into the half way break ahead of Jeff Bozell and Fred Campbell. In the second half Delarye's domination would continue until lap 171 when the word "HOT" would become a description for Delarye's engine. Under caution on lap 194 the smoke from Delarye's car turned to fire ending the 2nd most dominating run in Klash history. Ken Scheffler took over the top spot and held off Tom Thomas and last row starter Chad Blount for the win.

"Klash X" saw a new July date and a record \$80,000 purse. Front row starters Andy Ponstein and Billy Shannon traded the lead for the first 32-laps before Shannon was able to pull away and lead until lap 150 when Shannon's dreams went up in tire smoke as he spun off of turn four. That set up a Classic duel to the finish between two "Klash" champions Andy Bozell and Chris Orr. Bouncing off the wall on lap 166, Orr was able to recover to take his second Klash win.

"Klash XI" was a tale of two races. The first half of the race was mired by several crashes and spins. The crashing continued early in the second segment eliminating former winners Chris Orr and Todd Currier as well as Tim Devos, Kenny Warner and Billy Shannon. As the race reached the late stages Tom Thomas and Fred Campbell swapped the lead a couple of times with Thomas emerging as the winner of the 11th annual event.

"Klash XII" was a classic duel between two legendary Michigan short track racers. Andy Bozell along with outside pole sitter Fred Campbell ran inches apart the entire race. Campbell was finally able to pull away at the end and add the "Klash" to a long list of career wins.



The weatherman was extremely unkind to race fans attending the 2005 running of the **"Klash XIII"**. Rain delays turned the race into a two-day umbrella opening contest, and demolished several race cars during a sudden shower that hit in the middle of Wednesday night's "C" feature. The rest of the event had to be moved to the following night, in which the Zoo was still under threatening skies. Lee Anderson took the lead early and held a comfortable margin past the halfway point. Fred Campbell challenged for the lead late, but the rain made another appearance and the race was called off short 16 laps short of the 200-lap distance, Lee Anderson was declared the winner and Team Gentry left town with \$20,000 and a pile of trophies.

The running of the 2006 **"Kalamazoo Klash XIV"** brought out the big guns, as the \$25,000 top prize lured in many short track hot shoes. Dirt Late Model super star Scott Bloomquist was in the middle of a record breaking season, with his winnings that had already topped nearly \$300,000 of dirt short track wins. Bloomquist would be making his first asphalt start since 1992, behind the wheel of the Bailey Excavating/Sweet Mfg. house car. Johnny Benson, who was in the middle of one of his most successful Craftsman Truck Series seasons, made his first trip back to one of his old favorite short tracks. The local favorites were geared up for battle, as the press gave both of these out of towners most of the attention. However, at the conclusion of the Klash, the out of towners took home the top 5 spots, with Johnny Benson taking home the \$25K prize, followed by Tom Thomas, Phil Massuch, Leroy Magoon, and John DeLarye. The star studded "B Feature" had some huge names in the short track ranks, as John Gregga scored the win over such names as Scott Hantz, Fred Campbell, Phil Bozell, and Chris Orr. Terry Senneker was the fast qualifier out of nearly 70 Late Models that attempted to make the field.

"Kalamazoo Klash XV" became the highest paying asphalt short track race in the nation, paying an unprecedented \$30,157 to the winner of this year's spectacle. After 60 plus cars qualified for the historic show, Steve Needles had the fast qualifying award to add to his young resume. The local drivers vowed not to let the out of towners take home the big prize like the year prior, and true to his prediction, Andy Bozell scored his 4th Klash win of his career, boasting his single highest payday ever. Joe Bush was 2nd, followed by Steve Needles, Kenny Head, and Dave

Sensiba. Showing the competition of this event, Johnny VanDoorn won the "B Feature", followed by driving ace Tim DeVos.

"Kalamazoo Klash XVI" would become one of the greatest Klash races ever as 2006 Late Model champion Terry Senneker drove from 18th starting position to take the lead with one lap to go in the first segment of the race. After a three car inversion for the final segment put Joe Bush on the pole the stage was set for an epic battle between Bush and Senneker. The two would trade the lead back and forth before Senneker took the lead for good with just 19 laps to go. Bush held on for second ahead of Phil Massuch, Tom Thomas and Brian Bergakker. Buddy Head won the 'B' Feature while Steve Needles was quick time for the second year in a row.

"Kalamazoo Klash XVII" Steve Needles was the fastest of all 42 qualifiers for the 2009 running of the Klash with a lap of 12.646 seconds. Caleb Bisacky took the early lead and held on until lap 28 when Brandon Lyons charged by. Just twelve laps later former Klash winner Tom Thomas overtook Lyons and held the point until Needles caught and passed him with just 16 laps left in the first segment. Needles hung on to win the first segment in front of Thomas, Joe Bush and Terry Senneker. The start of the final segment saw a spirited duel that saw Senneker emerge on top and drive away from the field until a spin on lap 115. That spin gave TAG teammate Needles the lead back and he would hold off all challenges the rest of the way to win his first Klash trophy.

"Kalamazoo Klash XVIII" Many people would have considered Rick Sexton a long shot to win the 18th Annual Kalamazoo Klash but at the end of the 150 lapper he was the man with the hardware and the big check in victory lane. Sexton finished 3rd in the first segment of Klash XVIII and then hit the inversion perfectly to start on the pole for the second segment. Sexton held off several challenges from Phil Bozell who held on to finish second ahead of Trent Hellenga, four-time Klash winner Andy Bozell and Tom Thomas. Eastsider Mike Luberda finished 6th ahead of Randy Day, Phil Massuch, Curt Spalding and Tyler Roahrig. Johnny Benson set quick time earlier in the day with a lap of 12.615 while Cory Ryman won the last chance race.

"Kalamazoo Klash XIX" Outlaw Super Late Model point leader Phil Bozell charged through the field to win his first ever Kalamazoo Klash. Former Klash winner Steve Needles finished 2nd ahead of Johnny Benson, JR Roahrig and fast qualifier Trent Hellenga. Needles teammate Terry Senneker finished 6th ahead of Tom Thomas, Mike Luberda, Billy Shannon and Jeff Bozell. Notable finishers included Ross Kenseth in 15th, Ted Christopher in 17th and Andy Bozell. Chris Koslek and Todd Harrington won the Last Chance races.