



# **Thunder at Sunrise: A History of the Vanderbilt Cup, the Grand Prize And the Indianapolis 500, 1904-1916**

*John M. Burns*

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On a bright October morning in 1904, thousands of people flocked to Nassau County on rural Long Island to witness the first international motor sports competition in America: the newly created Vanderbilt Cup. By 1906, the number of spectators multiplied to a quarter million and America's place in motor racing history was assured. In 1908, the Vanderbilt Cup was joined by a second international competition, the International Grand Prize, the first grand prix held outside France. By 1913, the Indianapolis 500 would supplant the Vanderbilt Cup and Grand Prize as America's preeminent race, forever turning mainstream America's attention away from road racing and toward the oval tracks then proliferating around the country. Concentrating on the years between 1904 and 1916 and featuring a wealth of photographs, this book examines the early and relatively unknown history of American motor racing. Beginning with an overview of motor racing history, it covers the French origins of the sport and the first international competitions such as the annual Gordon Bennett Cup and the ill-fated Paris to Madrid race. The primary focus is on America's first three races of international stature: the Vanderbilt Cup, the International Grand Prize and the Indianapolis 500. Compiled in great part from contemporary sources such as newspaper accounts and automotive journals, the book covers not only these races, but also the ways in which each spurred development of the American automobile industry, making it at last a true competitor for that of Europe.

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