

# RACING TO SUCCESS

*In California and ten of the other Western states, an attractive fleet of 300 trucks moves truckloads of general commodities and LTL shipments of new home and office furniture. Those shipments move with a focus on performance levels that exceed the shipping customer's expectations.*



The KKW fleet logo includes a checker flag and a “Performance In Transportation” tagline. The fleet’s 850 trailers proudly display that logo.

The history behind the logo helps explain the fleet’s focus on performance.

KKW was founded in 1962. The Pomona, California, based carrier had nine tractors and ten trailers when Dennis Firestone purchased KKW in 1967.

## **TRACK SUCCESS**

After Dennis had spent several years getting KKW established and on track, he pursued a competitive hobby which turned out to be driving race cars. With a little luck and a lot of determination he became very successful at his new hobby. At one point he had won 23 consecutive national open wheel races including the '76 national championship in the amateur class Formula Ford. He then proceeded to win the professional series ‘Indy Lights’ in '79 winning 11 out of the 13 races in that series. His track success earned him the attention of the Indy Car community and garnered him a Championship Car ride for the Ontario 500 late in the '79 season driving a Jim Hall/Roger Penske Indy Car. Dennis continued as an Indianapolis 500 driver from 1980, where he earned the honor of CART rookie of the year, through 1987.

Although he had one of the fastest laps in the 1987 Indianapolis 500 Time Trials at 215.7 mph, a career ending accident resulting in a broken neck kept him out of that 1987 race and ended his racing career. It also resulted in Dennis putting his total focus into his KKW fleet.

## **SUCCESS TRACK**

The outcome of that focus is a growing company which partners with suppliers that help the KKW fleet deliver a new level of performance in providing information and transportation services that day-in and day-out exceeds their customers’ expectations.

When it comes to tires, Dennis said, “We started using retreads at KKW about seven or eight years ago.”

The retreads used by KKW were a competitive brand. About two years ago, a maintenance official from one of the larger LTL companies joined the KKW team and promoted the quality of the Bandag organization. While intrigued by this new employee’s enthusiasm for

***Fleet Owner Dennis Firestone (right) and KKW Maintenance Manager Andre Rensonnet pose with the KKW performance logo.***

## GRAM POSITIVELY IMPACTS OUR PERFORMANCE COMMITMENT TO OUR SHIPPING CUSTOMERS.”

Bandag, Dennis did not immediately change retread brands.

He said, “I got a firsthand look at the Bandag organization when I attended the 2005 Fleet Symposium. I left the Symposium impressed with the organization’s commitment to details.”

Perhaps of even more importance to Dennis and KKW was the tire team established by his Bandag host after the Fleet Symposium.

That team includes Dennis, his Fleet Maintenance Manager, Andre Renonnet; Bandag Regional Fleet Manager, Domingo Perez; Bandag Fleet Development Manager, Lupe Ibarra; Parkhouse Tire Sales Manager, Mike Lang and Parkhouse Commercial Sales Representative, Nick Damico. His Yokohama new tire representative is also a member of the tire team.

At regularly scheduled meetings, the team evaluates data collected about the fleet’s tires and implements programs utilizing best industry practices to improve both the dependability and the cost effectiveness of the fleet’s tire assets.

One of those best practices is a PSI system for the fleet’s trailers. The team also made a decision to change to 85 PSI, the standard air pressure level for

company trailers. A yard check program helps to insure that tires are road-ready when they leave a customer’s yard.

The fleet has a six-year age limit for retreading casings. Casings retreaded for the tractor drive-axle position are fitted with Bandag’s MegaTrek™ Drive design. FCR™ Trailer and FuelTech® Trailer are the Bandag designs used for trailer-axle tires.

Dennis Firestone said, “We maximize the utilization of our casing assets by retreading them as much as possible within our six-year age limitation.”

Recently, the KKW Fleet took delivery of 30 new trailers utilizing the Bandag OE Program. The 30 new trailers were equipped with Bandag retreads instead of new tires.

Dennis concluded, “While there is evidence we have made substantial improvements in uptime and reduced tire related costs, it will be the tire team’s challenge to measure those improvements. Even more important than saving money and increasing uptime is how our tire program positively impacts our performance commitment to our shipping customers. Our world at KKW is all about delivering solutions to our customer’s distribution needs.” ▸

