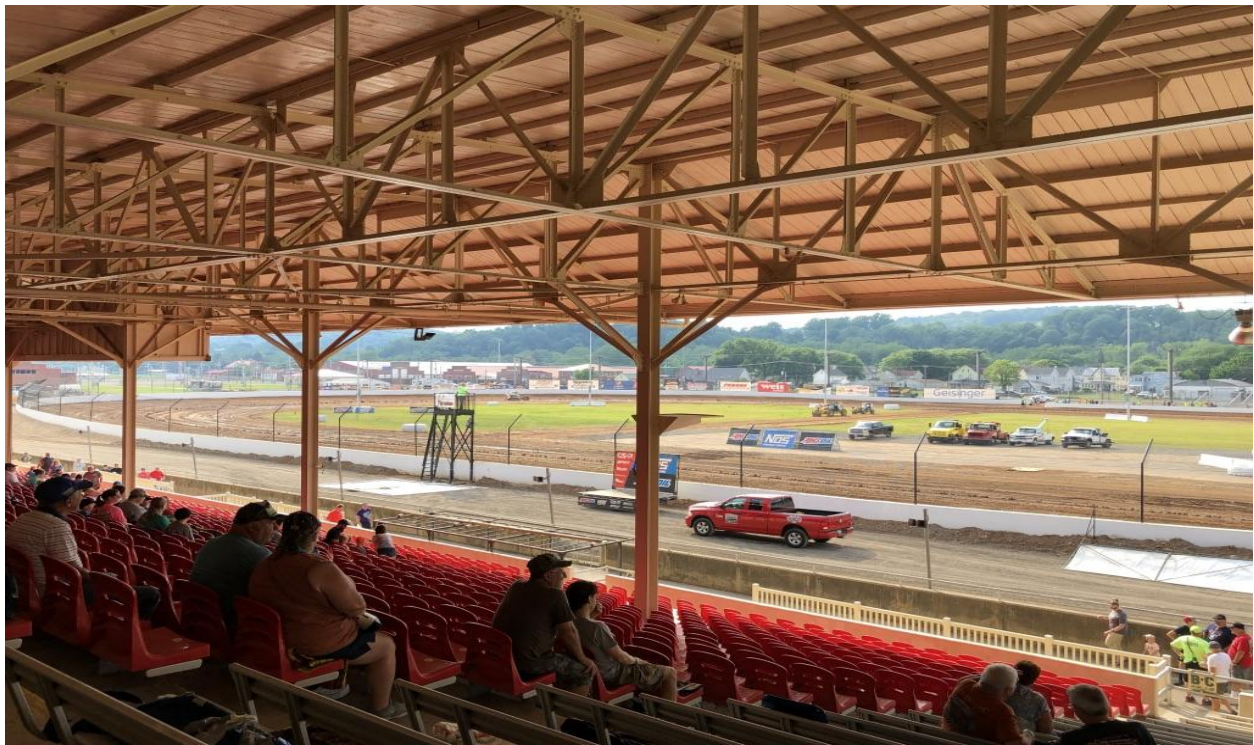


## 6-20-21: Bloomsburg Fairgrounds Speedway

The finale of USAC Eastern Storm was also the first ever race at the new  $\frac{3}{8}$  mile oval at the Bloomsburg Fairgrounds. The track was originally supposed to have run races weeks before but they got postponed, meaning the only cars that had ever been on track were during a testing session on Thursday.

I got to the track around 4:30 for 5pm gates. I got to the ticket booth and they were selling tickets so I assumed they were allowing people to buy now then lining everyone up at the gates to wait to get in. Good, that makes sense. I bought my ticket and walked the long walk through the fairgrounds to the grandstands and surprisingly they were letting people in well before 5pm. I asked the workers at the gates and they said they started letting people in around 3pm, when the pits opened. I hate it when tracks don't follow their advertised times - I got there before gates for a reason because I didn't know what the grandstands were going to look like and wanted to make sure I got a good seat. Covered grandstands can be difficult sometimes with the location of the support beams. Luckily it worked out alright and I was able to find a top row spot around where I would have chosen to sit anyway.



They had a bunch of fair food vendors set up for concessions with a large amount of options for food, ranging from pizza to subs to funnel cakes and milkshakes. The merchandise trailers were set up behind the grandstands.

The grandstands themselves offered pretty good views once you got a little ways up. Because the track is actually higher than the walkway at the bottom, the lower rows are unable to see anything at all due to the concrete walls. You have to be up at least a quarter of the way if not high to see anything. Once you're up sufficiently high though, the sightlines are really good (aside from the pillars) because the stands are set so far back from the track itself.



RotoRooter was a sponsor of the event and they had a giant toilet car which they were driving around and firing t-shirts out of a t-shirt gun. It takes the cake for weirdest sponsor thing I've seen at a race recently, but it was entertaining. They even parked it along the backstretch and people were sitting in it the whole time watching the race.





It was USAC sprint cars and ULMS super late models on the card, with 25 sprints and 16 late models. They started with hot lapping both. A bump started to develop in turn 1 and the sprint cars got pretty squirrely through it and one of the late models went fully up on two wheels, I thought he was going to flip over for a second. I'd expected some track work but they brought the sprint cars right out for qualifying afterward. Steven Drevicki caught a bike on that bump going into 1 and slammed into the wall, rolling on the roof and bringing out the red flag. They got his car cleaned up then a little while later Chris Window caught the bump and tumbled multiple times, coming to a stop upside down propped against the catch fence. The very next car out, Jake Swanson, hit the bump again and biked it and slammed into the wall. Everyone else was very wary and stuck to the bottom of the track.



They did a bunch of track work afterward to smooth out turn 1 and it actually seemed to work pretty well. Usually when a track tries to fix a bump in the middle of a show it just comes right back and bigger, but it seemed to take this time and wasn't much of an issue the rest of the night.

Next were heats for both divisions, which had a little bit of passing but not a ton. The track seemed really slick and the cars slid up quite a bit going into the turns before they were able to find the grip to really start rotating. Due to attrition, neither class needed a B main before the features.

The sprint cars ran their main first, with Kevin Thomas Jr. running away with it. There was some decent racing throughout the pack but it was a pretty narrow track and not really possible to pull a slide job. Robert Ballou won the Eastern Storm title by a single point over Brady Bacon.

My biggest complaint is with the track prep. Even though it's already very low banked and clearly very slick, they brought out the dump trucks and road graters to roll the track between every set of cars on track, knocking the cushion down and guaranteeing that the cars wouldn't have anything to lean on in the turns. Multiple drivers actually complained about the track, something I've rarely heard which must mean it was pretty bad. I don't understand Pennsylvania's obsession with knocking down the cushion all the time. I see it at Grandview in particular but at most of the PA tracks, they always roll the track excessively

and never let a cushion develop. The Indiana tracks, for example, do very little track maintenance in comparison and I think they put on a better show.

The other issue was dust. It didn't get into the grandstands but it was an issue with visibility, I had trouble seeing much of turns 3 and 4 for a lot of the race. I think they're going to need to figure out how to keep the dust down, especially because they're in a pretty populated area.

There was weather in the area (I'd later see lightning nearby as I was exiting the track) so they started the super late model feature while the victory lane interviews were still going on. It was unusual to see but I'm all for it, get in the racing while you still have a window to do so. The late models couldn't really pass (one of the drivers in the heat race interview had predicted as much, saying how it's so slick and no cushion or banking to work with), but it was fun watching the one get so close to the wall without actually hitting it until the very last lap. He was still able to finish though.



Overall, for being the very first show ever there, it's hard to fault them too much for anything. I think it was a lot of fun and they did a good job. I pretty much expected it to go a lot less smoothly than it did and I'm sure they'll make improvements for next time.