

8-23-20: Indiana State Fairgrounds

I got up early this morning after a late night last night, getting in from Lucas Oil Speedway really late. I was staying with my brother in St. Louis so it was about a 4 hour drive over to Indianapolis.

After a couple wrong turns I found the correct part of the fairgrounds that led into the racetrack. I was expecting a large crowd since last year this race wasn't supposed to even be happening but there was basically no one there when I arrived. I had my pick of places to sit and it was a real struggle figuring out where I wanted to be. It really came down to compromise, there didn't seem to be anywhere optimal. Sit in the lower sections and you could see the entire front stretch and the exit of 4 and entrance of 1, but lost quite a bit of the backstretch due to the low vantage point. Moving up higher, the backstretch was visible and most of the turns but there was a big building built right up to the wall on the exit of 4 and going down some of the frontstretch that blocked that area from view. The exit of 4 is generally one of my priorities as far as things I definitely want to be able to see, but I ultimately decided that seeing the entire backstretch was worth the sacrifice.



I made sure to get to the grandstands in time to watch the Indianapolis 500 that was taking place just a few miles away. It was painful being so close in geography and not being allowed to watch it but it was a unique experience to view it on the big screens from the grandstands at the Indy Mile. Silver Crown practice started during the 500 so I spent a while trying to watch both at once. They had to turn off the TV sound during practice so I was texting back and forth with my brother who was watching it on TV back home and he gave me updates about things I couldn't hear. I also moved around a lot trying to optimize TV viewing with track viewing, and eventually just left my backpack to mark my spot up high and moved down low to watch the 500.



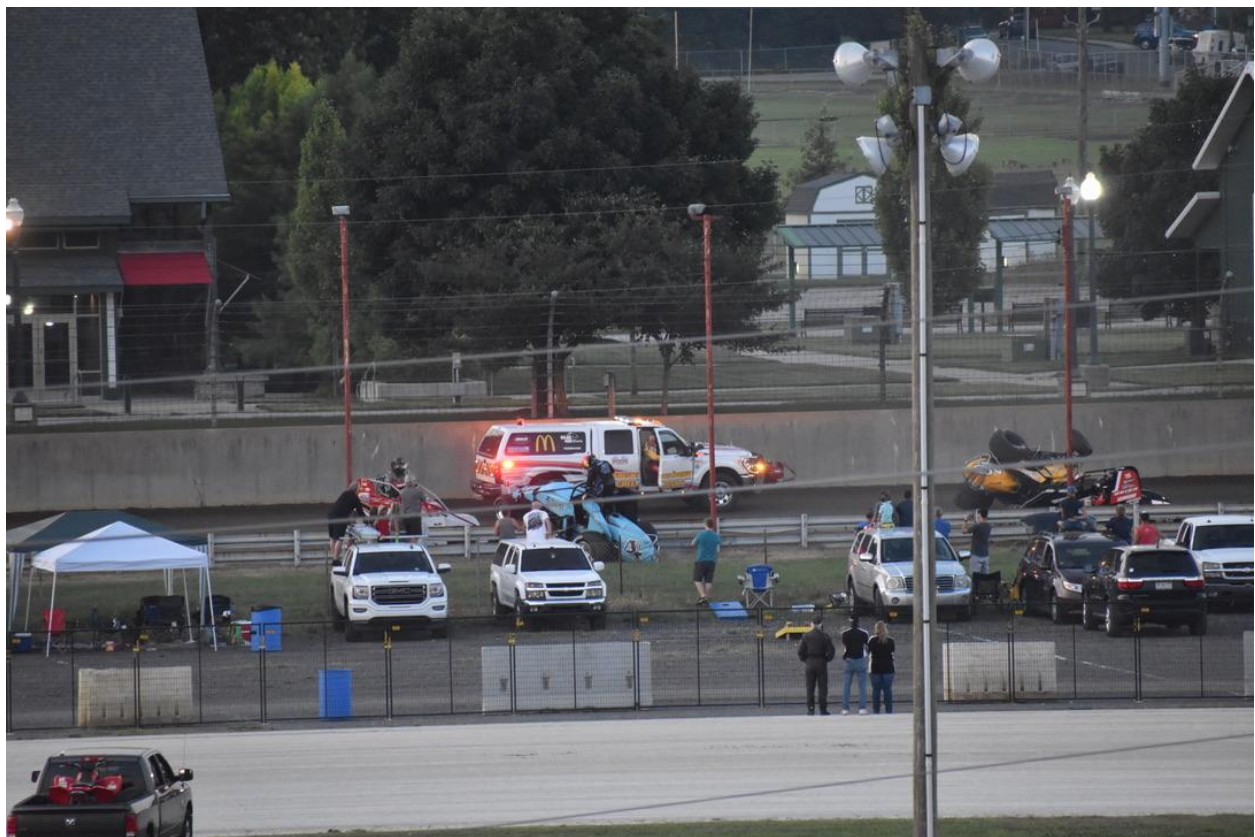
After the huge wreck at the entrance of pit road the 500 ended under caution. Not too long afterward racing started at the Fairgrounds with Silver Crown qualifying. Kyle Larson was .424 seconds faster than the entire rest of the field. I can't say I'm surprised given his year so far but that's just a massive margin.



There were over 30 cars that signed in so they ran a fairly tame semi feature to set the starting grid for the Hoosier Hundred. There was drama even before the cars even got on the grid for the feature though, as a number of cars made unapproved adjustments and had to go to the back, including pole sitter Kyle Larson. He started back in 24th and made his way all the way up to 4th position in only 8 laps, it was truly impressive to watch him work his way through the field with seemingly no effort.



A car got into the wall on the exit of 4 and brought out the caution on lap 8. On the restart, some cars got together on the backstretch exiting 2 and caused a big pileup, resulting in multiple cars getting upside down! Point leader Kody Swanson was involved in that wreck, ending his day.



After a lengthy cleanup they got back under green but only completed one lap before there was another incident. In the same spot as before, exiting turn 2, there was more contact and two more cars got turned upside down. One ended up resting on the inside guardrail and Brady Bacon got turned up the track and flipped into the outside wall. I never expected that four cars would flip in a race like this where there usually isn't a particularly large amount of contact.

They only ran until lap 15 before another caution for a car getting into the wall. Meanwhile Larson was steadily working his way forward, making it to the lead by lap 25, meaning he passed a car a lap every lap of the race so far.

Just a few laps later a car got high exiting 4 and got hard into the wall. I believe he flipped multiple times, but as I mentioned earlier, I couldn't actually see that portion of the track. Everything I could see about the dust flying and the reflections was consistent with the car flipping, and they did go red afterward.

After that cleanup, it had taken an hour and 15 minutes to complete one third of the race. There was a lot of attrition too, between wrecks and mechanical issues, and a full half the field was out of the race by around the halfway point.

On the restart, Larson had been cycled back a bit and made a very exciting pass for the lead. He drove hard into turn 1 and forced his way past CJ Leary for the position, making room where it didn't look like there was any to be had. Once he got out front he held it pretty solidly to take the win.

At one point later in the race, a light went out in turn 1. It was distinctly dark, I was really wondering if they were going to have to throw the caution while they got it sorted out but they kept going and just ran with it for the rest of the race.

It's really wild how good of a year Kyle Larson is having. He's won in everything and I've seen him win personally at least 8 times in the limited races I've been to. The event as a whole was really neat for all the history behind it. I really regretted not going to the Hoosier Hundred last year when it was presumed to be the last one, and I'm glad that racing is back at least for now at the famed fairgrounds. There's so much history to the event and I'm glad I was able to experience it. The race was also way better than my expectations. I came in with pretty low expectations due to the large track, single file racing, and general lack of contact and crashes, but it was a remarkably good race. It probably exceeded my expectations more so than maybe any event I've gone to before.

