

7-10-21: ERX Motor Park

I originally decided to fly into Minneapolis instead of Chicago for my Iowa trip because there were Sunday evening tracks that were much closer to there. After booking flights, I realized that Championship Off Road would be in town and I was really happy I made that decision. I love short course off road and it's so hard to get to since it really doesn't exist in the east at all. It was extremely exciting to be able to catch round 6 of Amsoil Championship Off Road at ERX after the Knoxville Truck race.

I got up at 6am and drove four and a half hours to get to the track. Parking was surprisingly easy - they directed us into what appeared to be the VIP lot according to the signs but they told me to park there so that worked out well. It was \$25 at the gate, a great deal for some 16 classes racing throughout the day. The schedule was pretty packed with races every half hour from 10:30am until 7pm.



The track is built in sort of a "V" shape, with the majority of the course on one side of it and the main spectator area on the inside of the V. From here, you can see all but the hairpin turn at one end and the straightaways leading there and back. Most people bring lawnchairs and sit on the grass. There's also some bleachers so I was able to grab a seat there that offered pretty good views. There's nowhere in the facility that can see the whole track except for maybe the spotters stand above the tower, but you can see 80 percent of the track from the main area. There was a backstretch viewing area but that was set low enough that you could see only a very small part of the track, it definitely wasn't the palace to sit.



There was a split option on the backstretch and through one of the big banked corners. I used to not like split lanes because I didn't feel like they contributed to the racing very effectively, but it worked here for sure. It was interesting watching the different classes and how their lane choice differed as well as seeing certain trucks be able to work one lane better than others.



The racing started off with the kids classes and moved up to the professionals at the end. There were 16 classes total between kids, buggies, side by sides, and trucks. The car counts were surprisingly good, at least compared to what they were last time I saw short course off road at Lucas Oil Speedway. Many of the classes had upwards of 15 vehicles and some well over 20. The side by side classes in particular were very well attended.

I did appreciate that the video board was held up with a forklift.



There were a bunch of wrecks and lots of carnage throughout the event. One side by side got turned into the end of a concrete wall coming to the finish line and sheared off a front tire, sending it straight up into the air probably over 30 feet high, luckily straight up and back down or it could have easily landed in the grandstands with the height it got. There was another tire that was sent 20+ feet into the air as well a little later on, and another tire that climbed the k rail and disappeared out of the track on the other side.

The track crews did track prep between every class that ran. It was mostly in the big sweeping corners and they mostly just turned over the dirt and spread it evenly again. It was a very different type of prep than I'm used to at dirt oval racing - there seemed to be no need to pack or work in the track at all, they just needed to spread the dirt out again and that was sufficient. They did use a bulldozer to break up some of the bluegroove by just zigzagging across it with the treads, a technique I haven't seen before. It seemed to be fairly effective.

The five professional classes were Pro Stock SxS, Pro Mod SxS, Pro Lite, Pro 2, and Pro 4, and they were the final five to run. The side by sides has great car counts and good racing. The Pro Lite feature was the wildes of the night for sure. It started off with one truck getting turned right at the crest of the big jump, going sideways and barrel rolling down the entire 200+ feet. It was a crazy wreck and even wilder was the fact that the truck didn't even look like it had too much damage, at least compared to what I would have expected. It just shows how durable those trucks are. There was a ton of carnage throughout the race with trucks losing all kinds of body work and various parts and pieces on the track. One truck lost a hood and a track worker ran out under green to pick it up and pull it off the track. There was enough gap

that he was able to do it between trucks, but I've never seen a series where they allow track workers on the track under green in any situation.



The Pro 4 feature might have been the best racing I've ever seen in short course off road in person. It was only 10 trucks (one was a scratch for the feature) but they had some amazing racing. It was a 3 or 4 truck fight for the lead the entire race. They were going back and forth, swapping the lead turn after turn. It was an epic battle, so much fun to watch and just incredibly good racing. Its also wild watching them jump close to 200 feet in distance off the big jump.



The racing all throughout was extremely fun. The facility was great, and like other short course off road tracks I've been to the paddock was completely open for everyone to wander through, which I always appreciate. The track itself put on an excellent show throughout all the varied classes and they kept the show moving and even got back on schedule about halfway through the afternoon after starting close to an hour behind. I would come back in a heartbeat, and I would love to see more of the Championship Off Road races this year.