

2-01-20: Boardwalk Hall

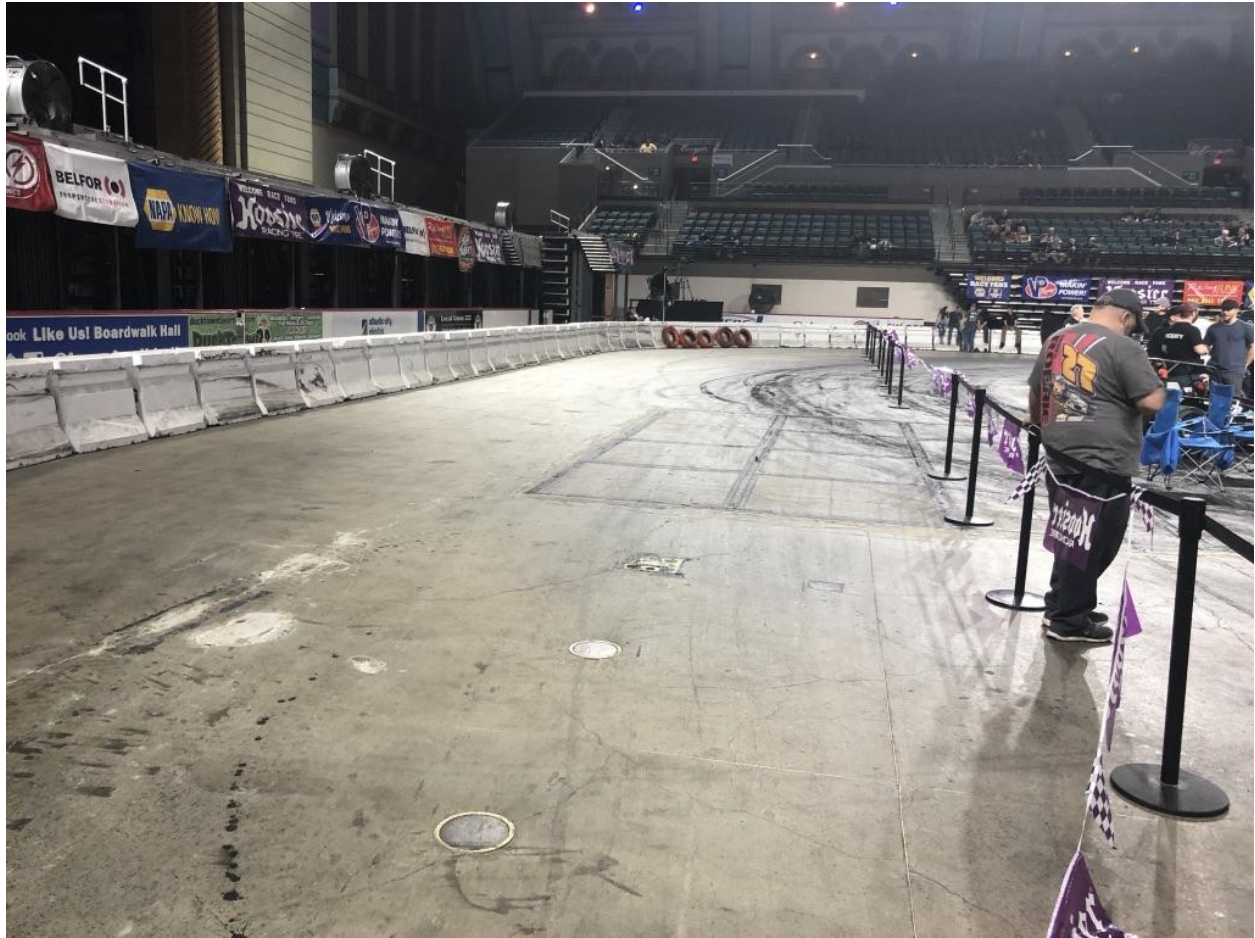
I made the five hour drive this morning to Atlantic City for the second Indoor Auto Racing event of the season. I already went to Allentown at the beginning of the year and I'm planning on checking out all four races this year. The TQs put on such an exciting show and it's a really unique race to experience.

The drive down had a scary moment when I drove past a car on the other side of the freeway with the front half of the car fully engulfed in flames. I saw people standing a little ways away so I assume that everyone made it out before the fire caught. Hopefully that's the most fire I see today.

I'd never been to Atlantic City before and I can't say I'm a big fan from this initial interaction. It felt kind of like driving into a wannabe Vegas and the big casinos all felt a bit out of place. I parked in a big garage with basically no one else in it a block away from the arena and walked down the boardwalk to the entrance. I will say that the boardwalk looks like it could be pretty nice when it's not raining and 30 degrees.

The arena was actually really neat. The entryway had a couple small exhibits of art and history of the area and had a very modern decor. I bought a reserved seat and that came with a pit pass so I was directed straight forward and through a couple hallways onto the arena floor, which was level with the ground.

The first thing I noticed was just how sticky the corners are. I knew they put down corn syrup for grip but it was sticky enough to feel like it was going to pull my shoes off - I'm pretty sure it could have if they weren't tied. Interestingly, and luckily, it didn't stick to my shoes at all and I didn't feel any stickiness once I left the track.



All the cars were lined up around the track, Three Quarter Midgets, Slingshots, and Champ Karts. I'm always amazed how small the TQs are. They're just big enough for an adult to sit in and nothing more. The other thing that I find so interesting is the difference in wheel size. There are two options for wheel size, one significantly larger than the other. I would have expected that one or the other would hold an advantage but it really doesn't seem to be so, both appear equally competitive.



There's also quite a difference in other ways between the cars, mostly in chassis/roll cage geometry and shock and suspension set up. There's definitely more variance there than in the slingshots and champ karts, classes which are generally much more spec than the TQs.





I wandered around checking out the cars until the pit party was over then headed back to the lobby and up the big staircase to the main concourse. Boardwalk Hall has a very unique setup in which it's basically one big room containing everything - concourse, grandstands, arena floor, and stage (since it's primarily a concert venue). It's basically set up with the stage at one end, "U" shaped grandstands, and main concourse also in a U shape on the outside of the grandstands, but still within the same main area. It's a setup I haven't encountered before and it gave it a unique feel. When you're on the concourse you still feel like you're connected to the event much more so than in other arenas.

The other interesting thing about this setup is that the permanent grandstands actually overlap the track somewhat. In turns 3 and 4, there's a few feet of lip that extends out over the track, about 10 feet up. The rest of the grandstands are similarly about 10 feet above the track so no catch fence is necessary there. There's actually not any catch fence used anywhere on the track. It's just concrete k rails to protect the walls but the actual walls define the confines of the track, except for the stage area. It's a very unusual setup.

When I ordered my ticket I had to do a lot of guessing as to where I would want to sit. At Allentown I learned that the only place to see everything is up high in the corners, so that's what I went with. In this case, the reserved seats were the bottom half of the grandstands. Given that it's almost always better to be up high, I bought a seat in turn 3 on the topmost reserved row. This track, however, turned out to be the exception to the rule, since the overlap meant that only the front row could see the entirety of turns 3 and 4. The front and backstretch grandstands weren't any better (yes, I went around to every different

section to check out the view). Really you have to be in the front row to not be missing a big chunk of the track. It's the biggest problem with the venue - the best seats in the house, and the only unobstructed ones, would be to sit on the stage where they don't allow anyone to sit.

I did do a good job of choosing turn 3 though, as I think that minimized the blindspots. The racing today consisted of mains for the champ karts and slingshots and B mains and the A main for the TQs. Since it's a single race spread out over two days instead of 2 standalone events like the Allentown and Syracuse races, there was less racing than I was expecting, which was a little disappointing. I much prefer the single day format.



The car counts were strong though and the racing was excellent as always. I think this track is a little bit bigger than Allentown and the cars just fly around it. There were no flips surprisingly. It's actually kind of amazing how fast and close they can race, and how many other wrecks they can have, without a single car going upside down.