

3/26/22 Cherokee Speedway

I had intended to go back to Bristol for the final night of the Bristol Dirt Nationals but with the low car counts and forecasted below freezing temperatures I figured I was as satisfied as I was going to get with my time at Bristol for this trip and decided to count a new track instead. The World of Outlaws Late Models were at Cherokee Speedway for their second night and had good car counts so I decided to head over there.

The drive was quite pleasant, mostly on highways going through the small towns in Tennessee and the Carolinas. I got to the track a few minutes after gates opened and waited about 15 minutes in line to get in. I got a top row seat on the frontstretch on the turn 4 side. The grandstands were mostly concrete spanning the length of the frontstretch and actually going beyond turn 1, a remnant of when it was a half mile track instead of the current $\frac{3}{8}$ mile configuration. There was a section of metal bleachers above these concrete steps that I sat on. The sightlines weren't great, a lot of turn 4 was hidden sitting down and I could only see everything when I was standing up.





Car counts were strong with 40 World of Outlaws Late Models headlining, plus 18 602 modifieds and 21 street stocks. Cars were pitted in a combination inside and outside the track. All the late models were outside, it seemed like local teams could buy a spot on the infield and everyone else parked outside but it wasn't clear.

The track was very wet when the modifieds came out for hot laps and they slid all around the track and never got up much speed but when the late models came out immediately afterwards it seemed to come into shape pretty quickly. Turn 3 was a bit treacherous throughout hot laps and multiple cars got too high on entrance and slid up the track, one getting into the outside wall and climbing it with the right side. Then they ran three at a time qualifying, where one car got hard into the turn 1 wall.



The track seemed tacky and interesting up until heats started. The first heat started wildly with the fast time car going into turn 1 under another car on the first corner and slid up the track and into the wall, ending his night. After that, and for the rest of the night, it was everyone straight to the bottom and follow the leader there the whole time.

The modified feature had a lot of spins, they really struggled to keep the cars going straight on the rubbered up track. There were probably 10 cautions in the 20 lap feature, including for the leader cutting a tire with two to go.



The World of Outlaws feature was more follow the leader on the bottom but had one exciting moment when Brandon Sheppard as the leader got tangled with a lapped car and spun out. The car didn't seem to be damaged but it put him to the back of the pack and I was looking forward to watching him drive through, but he wasn't really able to go that far. Even the fastest car in the field could only use the outside to pass up to about 18th position or so and was stuck midpack the rest of the race. Overall the feature just wasn't very interesting. I don't like tracks that take rubber and just stick everyone to the bottom, it just doesn't make for good racing. At least the extremely gusty wind, while making it rather chilly, kept the surprising amount of dust completely out of the grandstands.

The street stocks were the only class that could actually use multiple grooves and they put on the best racing of the night. I do love street stocks, it doesn't matter what the track is they always seem to be able to race all over it.

I didn't love the track personally and I doubt I'll be back due to the proximity of other tracks I know I like more, but it was good to check it out while I was in the area and fun to see the Outlaws, even if they didn't put on a particularly good feature event. Now just a 13 hour drive home to round out the week and a half road trip.