

7-27-22: Pendleton County Fairgrounds

Since Terre Haute got rained out today (or really ground-saturated-out since there wasn't projected to be any rain this afternoon/evening) I searched for anything else within a reasonable drive running and the only thing I found was the Pendleton County Fairgrounds in Kentucky, about two and a half hours away. I decided I would head down there for the evening, stopping at a disc golf course on the way where I lost three discs, an unfortunate personal record.

Races were scheduled to begin at 7:30 but they actually began closer to 8:30, having done a kid's power wheel race plus a long time for the competitors to get their cars ready. The event was held in a small area that seemed to be set up for tractor pulling, cordoned off by k-rails on both sides. In quite a lengthy process they got the forklift operator to position two concrete blocks in just the right configuration for the circle track racing.



They brought out a literal fire truck to hose down the track, making it quite muddy to keep the speeds down. They seemed to have overwatered a little bit on the front stretch because there was a big standing pool of mud that even the forklift had a hard time navigating through. I was impressed by the firefighter's ability to regulate the distance from the hose and spray just to the edges of the track but not get any of the spectators wet.



The cars were four cylinder front wheel drive, unmuffled and clearly prepped for the event, with big and heavily treaded front wheels, tiny back wheels, and big bumper bars on the front and back. Some of them were very adept at driving this sort of track, requiring a lot of sliding around the back end to get the rotation through the corner, and some were clearly very new to it. One car didn't even have a right rear tire at all but seemed to race just fine.



The racing was more interesting than I expected, at least for the first couple of heats. There were some drivers who were both pretty fast and very aggressive, with a lot of contact, both between cars and just getting into the concrete barriers on their own. They sprayed mud all into the stands, making people run quickly back to get out of the splash zone.

They raced only two at a time though, which was problematic. It seemed like they were set up for a bracketed elimination since I heard the announcer talk about going into the “losers bracket” and “moving onto the next round”. I eventually talked with the promoter who said that they would normally have run 3 or 4 cars in a heat but there weren’t many entries tonight and they needed to “make the show last longer” so they only ran two at a time. It’s an interesting edge case but ultimately not countable.

I wandered off to get food, a disappointing funnel cake that couldn’t even hold a circular shape, and an actually quite good ribeye steak sandwich for only \$8. Count that among the better track food I’ve had.



I checked back in for the end of the circle track racing, and to my surprise they actually ran three cars in the final! After the promoter said they wouldn’t, they actually did, making it 100% countable and validating my 5 hour round trip. One of the few times I was happy for a promoter doing what he specifically said he wasn’t going to do. It’s track 149 for me, setting up (hopefully) Bloomington on Friday as my 150th, and my first track in Kentucky, my 33rd state.

