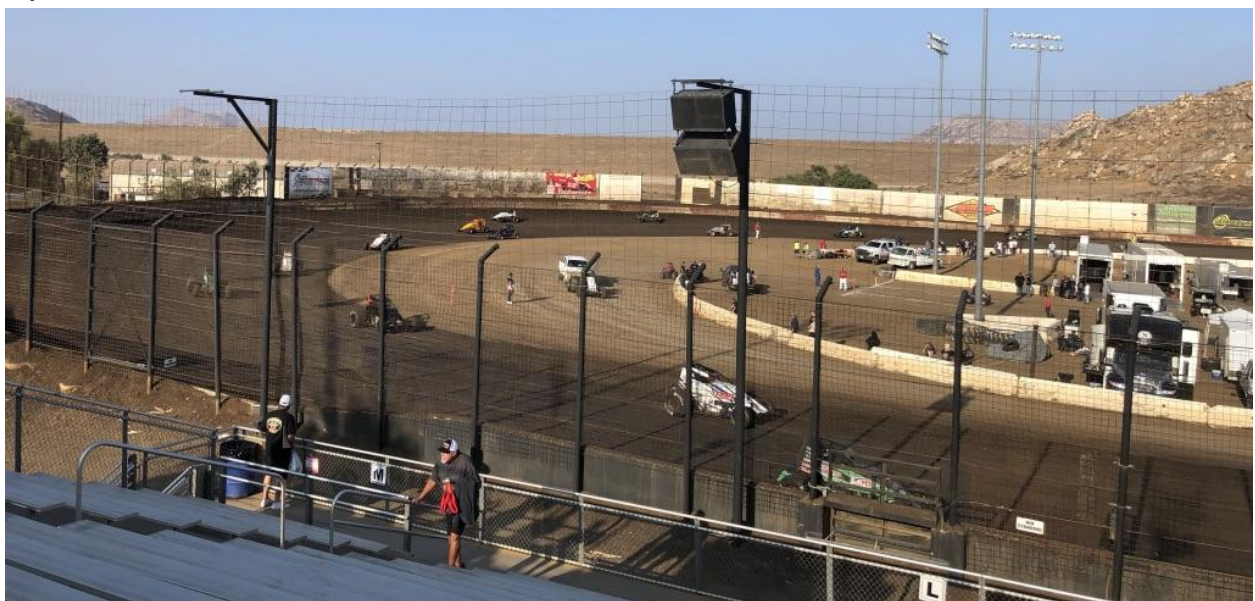


8-21-21: Perris Auto Speedway

I was in LA visiting a friend and the timing worked out perfectly to see the USAC/CRA 410 sprint cars at Perris Auto. We stopped at a nice disc golf course for 18 holes on the way and got to the track right about 5pm. It was unclear from website when on-track activities would actually happen so I played it safe and arrived when the gates opened, which was a good decision because it took almost 15 minutes to even get our tickets at the gate. It seems like their credit card machine was very slow, but even paying in cash the line moved exceedingly slowly.



Once we got in we had our choice of seats. The grandstands run all the way from the entrance of 1 back through turn 4. The only visibility issue is that the speakers are very large at the top of the catch fence. They're not in the way when sitting, but standing on the top row they would actually block part of the backstretch and turns which is a little unfortunate but didn't turn into an issue since there was no one sitting directly in front of me and therefore no need to stand. I tend to sit on the turn 4 end of the front stretch and did the same here. I think the middle would be slightly better because the stands aren't set back far from the track so the fence can obscure a bit of the far parts of the turns, but it wasn't bad. I will say that the catch fence is one of the nicest and tallest I've ever seen at a short track.



There were a couple minutes to wander around the facilities and they were very nice. The concessions and restrooms were all permanent brick buildings. There were different areas for burgers and chicken, pizza, and ice cream, and there was even a full bar with barstool seating and TVs showing sports. I ate beforehand so I can't comment on the quality of the food, but it was some of the most expensive of any track I've been to, with \$8 pizza slices, \$8 hot dogs, and \$12 chicken and fries.



There was no track work going on when we got there and they didn't seem to have any packer trucks. They pushed all the cars for engine heat not long after 5 and rolled them along the track for quite a while doing wheelpack. There were 27 wingless 410s and 7 senior sprint cars. Hot laps followed in groups of 9, then single car qualifying for the USAC cars. The track was really slick for the first set of hot laps and they really struggled for traction, but it came in sometime in the next two groups and seemed to be really juiced up for qualifying. Several cars bounced around in turn 3 and biked just a little bit, but everyone stayed clean on all fours.

The first race of the night was a trophy dash and it started within five minutes of the 7pm post time. I thought it was a very neat format, in which the top 4 cars in qualifying ran four 3-lap segments and got points for where they finished in each to determine the winner. Each car had a chance to start on the pole for one segment. It's a very fair way of doing it and it actually had some passing too, I didn't really expect any with it being sprint cars and the first trace of the night. They also announced it was \$2,000 to win, making it much more than a trophy dash! That's more than a lot of features pay.

It was a California racing hall of fame night so they had a number of interviews with various people and a long victory lane interview after the trophy dash, but that was about it for the festivities. Heat racing was underway around 7:30 with three heats of nine cars each. There was an impressive amount of passing and slide jobs even in the first heat. It might be some of the most passing I've ever seen in wingless sprint car heat racing, it usually takes a while for the track to open up. Here, the track had two grooves from the very start and stayed that way throughout the night. It was a lot of fun to watch.

The senior sprint cars ran their heat then ran their feature before the 410 consi. There was one driver who was 80 years old and was running his final race tonight, which is very impressive. The 7 cars ran a 20 lap feature that had a pass for the lead but not much else.

The sprint car LCQ started 15 as they only took the top 4 from each of the three heats to the feature. I liked having a 15 car feature qualifying 10.

After the LCQ they sprayed the top of the track with the water truck but that was the only track prep of the night. The track was in great shape so I was really happy they didn't touch it, but I've been to so many tracks that would have felt the need to scrape the cushion and roll it all in again. I'm glad they were able to just leave it alone.



They then brought out all the cars starting the A main onto the front stretch and opened the gates and allowed the fans to wander around and meet the drivers and see the cars up close. I was mostly

interested in the track since I've never actually set foot on a race-prepped dirt track before. It was very sticky, more so than I was expecting, with noticeable moisture in the clay that pulled back against your shoe each time you took a step. It also wasn't smooth - there were ruts throughout that were multiple inches tall. I didn't see any rubber laid down but I was only on the front stretch where there wouldn't be as much regardless. Looking into the turns it didn't seem to have much of a cushion but the packed dirt was obvious against the loose dirt up top.



I was glad to see that there was a solid infield catch fence as well. The whole facility is very high caliber. I also really took notice while walking on the track that the infield is set distinctly below the level of the grandstands, and this is huge for visibility. I usually don't like haulers being parked in the infield because it means you can't see the backstretch, but because they were so far down the visibility wasn't impacted basically at all. The building in the infield was the only thing that covered any part of the track, and it only overlapped with the very inside part of the backstretch that isn't an issue at all.



Everyone filtered off of the track and they lined up for the A main and threw the green flag around 9:30. There was contact in turn 1 that led to a stackup of four cars in turn 2, with one climbing up a wheel and surprisingly not flipping over. Most cars were able to continue. On the restart, they got two laps in before two cars got together in the exit of turn 4. Both started bouncing around to the point that they were both very close to digging in a wheel and flipping. One kept it going, the other spun out against the wall on the frontstretch. The caution seemed to be a couple seconds late in flying and an oncoming car slammed into him. Two other cars piled into the melee with one ending up on its roof right about the start/finish line.



There were a couple other incidents, including one car running into the back of another coming down the backstretch and shearing his right front wheel right off. Another over-rotated turn 3 and popped a big wheelie while coming down the track, headed straight for the infield. An oncoming car ducked below and I thought was going to hit straight into him but managed to avoid, possibly by going underneath the raised front wheels to some degree.

The racing at the front was really good. Stevie Sussex got out to a lead and clearly had speed but was also real squirrely through some of the turns, catching a bit of a bike multiple times and getting into the wall once. He held onto the lead for a while through lapped traffic and it was a good battle. There was a rut in turn 4 that he hit a couple times, once enough to allow Brody Roa to get underneath and take the win. It was a very exciting feature, lots happening throughout the field and a great battle for the win.

We were out and on the road by 10:30, marking a well run show that would have been close to an hour quicker without the track walk in the middle. The facility was very nice, the racing was fantastic, and I would definitely come back again.