

## 6-19-20: Tri-State Speedway

Indiana Midget Week was originally scheduled to race on the red clay of Bloomington this evening but that was unfortunately canceled due to Covid restrictions. I'll have to make sure to add Bloomington into a future trip - it looks like a really exciting track. USAC decided to add a second Lincoln Park date instead, so I decided to check out somewhere I hadn't been before. Thus I made the two and a half hour drive to the southwest corner of Indiana where Tri-State Speedway is nestled between corn fields out in the middle of nowhere. The World of Outlaws Sprint Cars were on tap for the first day of their two-day event. This would be only the third time I'd seen the World of Outlaws, and only the second time I can remember since I was 6 when I watched them in Vegas.

Tri-State is set up basically in a field with the track at an angle to the roadways and parking around it. It wasn't entirely clear where I was allowed to park versus what was out of bounds or a driveway, but I pulled up next to another car and figured that'd be alright. There are grandstands on both sides of the track with separate entrances so I went to the backstretch where my reserved seats were.

Due to Covid there were temperature checks to get in the gate but that didn't seem to add any real time to the wait. It was confusing how the reserved seats worked - I picked up my ticket and got my wristband, but the person at the reserved entrance said I needed another wristband to let me in there. After talking to multiple people I finally was pointed to a couple police officers in a small shed that gave me a wristband, sort of a strange arrangement.

I found a seat in the top row right in the middle. The reserved seats were really nice with full seatbacks and lots of legroom. The sightlines were really good, and I'm not sure there would really have been a bad seat in the house once you got about 5 rows up.



I had time to kill so I wandered around the Outlaws souvenir trailers and made a lap around the pit area. It was fenced off with chainlink so I was able to take a look at all the cars and haulers through the fence. There were UMP modifieds in the pits as well which I was excited to see, I thought it was just the Outlaws as a standalone event. I always love modified racing, even if it's UMPs.



I circled around to the front stretch merchandise haulers and I bought a new World of Outlaws logo pin I didn't have. Pins are about the only thing I collect, but I buy just about any new pin I run across at a racetrack.

There was some construction equipment parked outside the track and I was able to walk right up to a road grader. Little known fact about me is that I was obsessed with construction equipment as a kid and I still get very easily sidetracked by it. I spent about 15 minutes on the phone with my brother talking about the particular mechanisms it had and how the hydraulic pistons were arranged. The fact that the blade is rotated with pistons and not gears was my fact of the day. There was also a combine harvesting corn across the street so I spent a few minutes just watching it work.





I got back to my seat in time for hotlaps. The track is a tight quarter mile paperclip with medium banked turns that are of a very small radius. It's got real dark, tacky clay that barely kicked up any dust all night. I was very impressed with the surface and I always love me a bullring.

33 sprint cars and 14 modified signed in. They all did hot laps, the sprint cars qualified, then were the heats. Nothing crazy happened throughout. The track was pretty single grooved for most of the heat races but that's not too surprising, tacky tracks like that can take a while to widen out. It did make an interesting contrast with the wingless sprint cars I've been watching the past several days. I definitely enjoy wingless sprints more on the whole, but really they're both a ton of fun.



The track had some very interesting looking push trucks. They're uniquely shaped and I later found out they were custom built for the track. They did much of the work, pushing off the sprint cars and also acting as vehicles for the track workers and as tow trucks. There were three of them, each a different color.





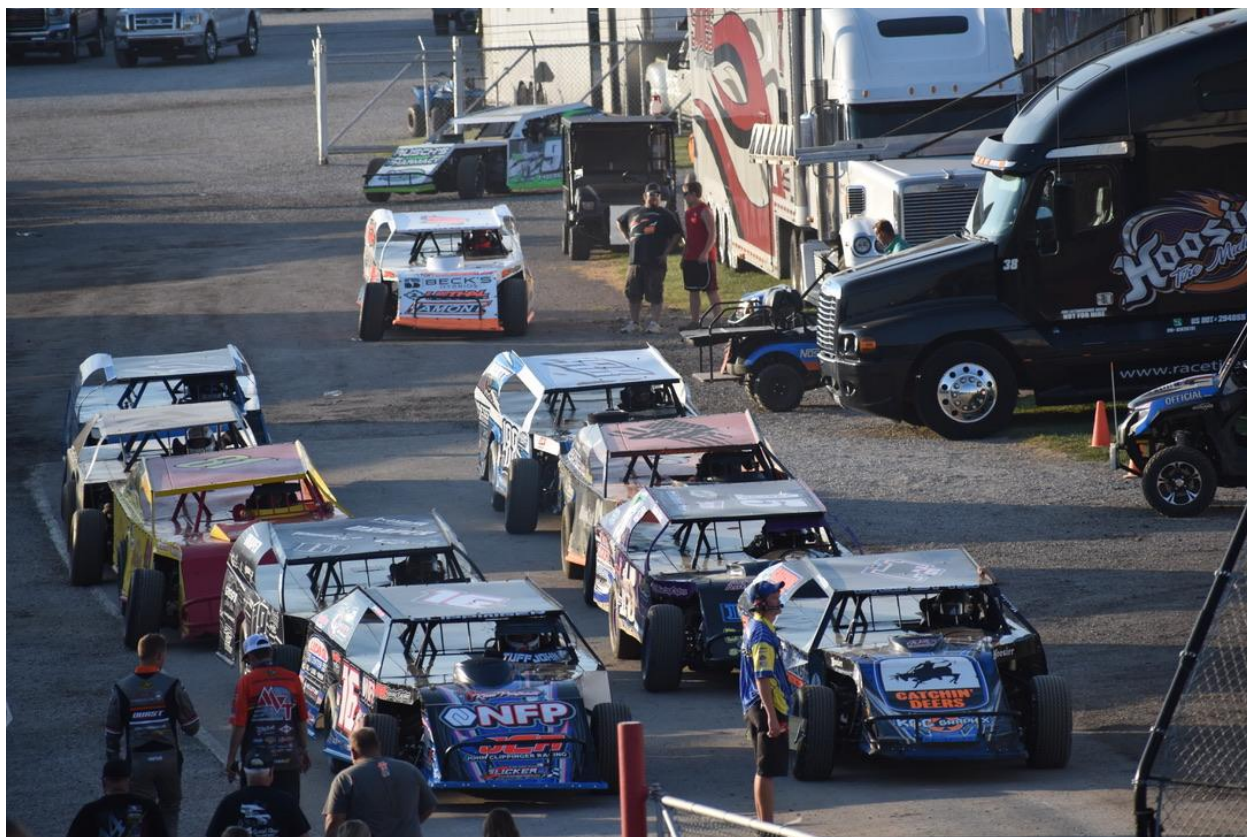
Feature time came and the World of Outlaws went first. The track widened out nicely by that point and they put on a great show. The wildest moment happened early on in the race. Jeff Swindell caught the bike going into turn 1 and started tumbling. The track in that turn is set up without a catch fence; the wall is of short concrete, basically a k-rail, and there's large wooden billboards for advertising a few feet behind the concrete. When Swindell started to flip, he caught air and went straight over the wall and over the top of the billboard! The wing caught a chunk of the top corner of one of them and tore it off. He came to rest on his wheels behind the billboards, out of view of the grandstands, and up against the chainlink fence separating the track from the pit area. Apparently he was able to be pushed to his pit stall. It's easily the craziest crash I've ever witnessed live. Not that I'm hoping for anyone in particular to crash, but it's one of those things that if it's going to happen I want to be there to see it and this sort of crash tumbling so high up and over the wall and billboards is just crazy.



The rest of the race was a lot of fun and got really enjoyable when the leaders ran into traffic. Being such a small tight track there's not a lot of room to maneuver through the slower cars and it kept the race interesting to the end. Carson Short, a wingless racer who's a regular with the USAC sprint, put a wing on and won his very first World of Outlaws race and it's always fun to see a first time winner.

The modifieds rounded out the night and put on a good show as well. There wasn't any track prep between features and the sprints had built up a really tall cushion right up against the wall. Only one modified was really able to run it effectively and took a solid lead. The second place car kept trying it and kept going too deep and hitting the cushion with the right rear, knocking the car to the left and slowing the momentum. The third place car seemed to have speed if he could avoid mistakes but kept jumping the cushion entirely, bicycling up on two wheels multiple times in the fluff up top.





Late in the race a mid pack car spun on the exit of turn two. The car behind swerved low to avoid, forcing him into the car behind him, which climbed over his front tire and rolled over! A flip was entirely unexpected since the feature was pretty spread out and the car really couldn't hold that much speed through the tight corners.





The event ended at a reasonable hour and I got out without any traffic difficulties. It was a great event overall, a professional and well-run facility that puts on a great show. I would happily come back, especially to see the USAC sprints and midgets.