

10-02-21: Talladega Superspeedway

Talladega has been my favorite NASCAR track basically for as long as I can remember and I finally got a chance to attend it in person! I'd originally bought tickets for April 202 and kept pushing them off until I got vaccinated, so it finally worked out to attend today.

I flew into Atlanta last night and stayed at an Airbnb only 15 minutes from the track. I got to the track a little after 9am and there was no traffic getting in at all, and I parked pretty close to the road, far away as is my custom to help with getting out.

The first thing to marvel at is how tall the banking is. Just walking by on my way in it's amazing how tall and steep the turns are.



I wandered through the festivities on the midway and the pre-race activities. There was a Q&A with Todd Gililand and Tanner Gray that I listened to at the Ford area. I dropped by the freestyle motocross exhibition and they had some pretty good trucks, up to a kiss of death backflip. Idahoan brand was there giving out free cups of instant mashed potatoes which was great because that meant I didn't need to buy breakfast.

I eventually wandered into the track itself and found my seats. The track is absurdly large, seeing it on TV doesn't do justice to how gigantic 2.66 miles really is. Even with that though, it wasn't quite as far to the backstretch as I was worried it might be. I could make out the cars with the naked eye and with binoculars I could see them perfectly well.



It helped being in the very top row, row 76. I wouldn't want to be much lower down since there are a number of tall buildings in the infield, a decent hill inside, and all the campers lining the inside wall all around. Even where I was I couldn't see the bottom of the track on the backstretch and I could barely see the bottom lane in turns 2 and 3, but it was a perfectly adequate view and most of the interesting things happen higher on the track.

The day started with the truck series running 94 laps. It was wild seeing trucks going almost 200 miles per hour in person, I've never seen that kind of sustained speed. The only other place where cars got anywhere near as fast would be Las Vegas, but I was last there before the reconfiguration.



The racing was solid throughout and there were a bunch of wrecks and interesting things. Some fuel lit on fire in someone's pit stall and gave off some pretty big flames before they put it out. There was a huge pileup with 19 trucks ultimately involved, which I'm pretty sure is the largest wreck I've seen in person, surpassing the 17 car crash in the 358 late models at Lincoln I saw earlier in the year.



It was neat seeing pit stops too, the last two truck races I saw at Bristol and Knoxville didn't have competitive stops and I usually don't sit where I can see pit road in New Hampshire.



There were several more wrecks, including Grant Enfinger getting some big air when he got turned exiting four. Chase Purdy as the leader got spun coming to the white flag and they threw the caution before the leader crossed the line, setting up a green-white-checkered. It was a wild finish, with Tate Fogleman turning John Hunter Nemechek coming through the tri-oval to take the win! He then spun himself and got collected with another truck, going drivers side hard into the inside wall. Because the truck was totaled, he had to take the mandatory ride in the ambulance back to the infield care center. They also had to take the truck on a wrecker into victory lane so it was quite a bit delayed. It's always neat to see a first time winner. It marked the third first time winner in a row in the trucks at Talladega.





Then was the Xfinity race, scheduled for a 3:30 green flag to round out the double header. I was glad that both Trucks and Xfinity raced today, when I originally bought tickets it was Trucks and ARCA and Xfinity is way better than ARCA.



Coming to the end of the first stage, Allmendinger and Sam Mayer got together in turn 3, sending both of them hard into the wall. They actually broke the metal wall and there was a red flag for welding repairs.

Later on, Gragson got turned into the wall in turn 4, resulting in a gigantic hit nose first. He got hit again twice more for a total of three really hard hits. He was fortunately alright but the car caught some air and you could clearly see just how hard the impact was. This brought out the second red flag of the race.

There was another big wreck in turn 4, bringing out another red flag and ultimately ending the race prematurely because of the impending darkness with 20 laps to go. It was really disappointing, the end of the truck race as heart pounding excitement and anticipation and I was sad not to see that for the Xfinity race, but it was some really good racing throughout the day. They never really got spread out which was good to see, and even through the one set of green flag pit stops they came back together fairly quickly and didn't run single file for too long.

Brandon Brown got his first ever Xfinity win by just nosing ahead at the time of caution, making the second first time winner of the day.

Overall the experience was amazing. I'd wanted to come to this track for so long and it definitely lived up to the expectation. My seats were great and I'm not sure there's anywhere else I'd rather be outside of the boxes above the grandstands. The binoculars really came in clutch and I would like to have a pair with a little more field of view, but they gave me a good sight of just about everything since most of the action happens in a single pack. The excitement was everything I wanted it to be and I will definitely be back in the future.