

6-26-21: Riverhead Raceway

I'd been meaning to go to Riverhead for years. I love tour modifieds and they race there weekly, but the location on Long Island is just very inconvenient, I either have to deal with a ferry or deal with traffic through New York City. Today, a great opportunity presented itself in that I had one friend that needed a ride to New York and another friend that needed a ride home from Long Island so it was the perfect time to finally check out the track.

The first thing I noticed is how right in the middle of the city the track is. There's a car dealership across the street and a Dick's Sporting Goods on one side. It's nestled into a lot that's just wide enough for the track turned at a bit of an angle, with the pit area behind.



Admission was \$30 which struck me as very steep for what seemed to be a weekly show. Due to crazy traffic about multiple crashes I only got to the track 10 minutes before racing started but I was able to get a nice top row seat on the backstretch. There weren't very many people there at all it didn't seem. I suppose the grandstands are pretty large to accommodate the crowds for the Whelen Modified Tour events, but they still looked very sparse. Maybe the \$30 price tag scared people away.

Because it's such a small quarter mile track the sightlines appeared to be really good basically wherever. You could sit in the front row and see everything, and a lot of people set up lawn chairs or sat at picnic tables right on the ground level which worked because the track was built down into the ground in a bit of a bowl.



They started with single car time trials for the late models. They must have required mufflers (understandable for being right in the middle of town) since they were the quietest late models I've ever heard. There were only 11, a little disappointing, but I was happy with the 21 crate modifieds and 19 tour modifieds. Also on hand were 14 mini stocks, 13 figure 8 cars, and 27 enduro cars. Heat racing for both classes of modifieds and the mini stocks followed. Racing was solid overall. There was a lot of two wide in all classes. The crate modifieds had a couple wrecks, with two cars getting put hard into the wall and tearing up their front ends. There was an El Camino converted into a tow truck, something I've definitely never seen before.



I appreciated how well run the show was. They didn't run excessive pace laps, no intermission beyond doing the national anthem, and they didn't throw the caution if a car was off the track. They also ran every restart with the cone choose rule and I always appreciate that, though I think it was a one-off special event and not a regular occurrence.

Feature racing started with 50 laps for the late models that was a lot more interesting than I had expected given the low car count. The leader at one point pulled off with a mechanical issue and came back 20 or so laps later. He started at the back of the pack and drove to fourth on track, even though it wasn't for position it was impressive watching him make his way through the field, he clearly had the car to beat.

The crate modifieds put on a good show, as did the tour modifieds. There were multiple big wrecks in both features, which is unsurprising given how fast and narrow the track is. There's really nowhere to go if something happens in front of you or someone just gets loose in the turn. One driver after getting wrecked got out of his car and with his helmet still on, sprinted across the track at another car stopped during the red flag. Officials were chasing after him and grabbed him right before he got to the car he was going after.



Every time I see tour modifieds I'm reminded just how good of a show they put on, they probably put on the best, most consistent racing of any class of asphalt racecars. There was a lot of passing and close

racing. The bottom was clearly dominant but multiple times the leader chose the top on the restart and lost the lead. It was a fun show and the best racing of the night.

An added bonus was that the figure 8 cars were running, giving me a second countable track in one night. There were only 13 of them. I was kind of disappointed about the car count and it meant that there was no action in the intersection, but the racing was actually really good. They were three wide multiple times, utilizing the apron and having lots of side to side contact. The 15 laps went by quickly.

An 8 cylinder enduro rounded out the night, with 27 cars that went green to checkered without needing a red flag. We were out by a little after 10 which was much appreciated. I enjoyed the racing quite a bit, but I don't think it offered enough to justify another trip through NYC to get there. If it was closer I would definitely go back just for the tour modifieds.