

8-21-20: Lucas Oil Raceway

Last night I was at Lincoln Speedway for the World of Outlaws Late Models so I slept on an air mattress in the back of my car in the parking lot for a few hours, getting up at 4am to drive out to Indiana. I went straight to Lucas Oil Raceway for the USAC Silver Crown series. I thought about going to Gas City for the second time since I knew the show would be excellent there, but I figured that this might be the only time that I ever ended up at Lucas Oil Raceway and it seemed like a good opportunity to check it off the list.

I timed the 9 hour drive perfectly and pulled up right about when gates opened. I was third in line to get in the gates and was amazed at how few people were there, just a handful. I had my pick of seats and ended up choosing the top row at the far turn 1 end of the grandstands. I think the sidelines would be pretty good wherever. There's some reserved seats at the top middle sections by the suites but not too many.



Practice was going for the three divisions racing today, USAC Silver Crown, Indy Pro 2000, and USF 2000. I had my DSLR camera as usual and I occupied a couple hours by taking pictures of the cars on track. No one seemed to mind if I went right up to the fence so I was able to poke my camera lens through the catch fence and get unobstructed shots of the cars coming down the front stretch. Usually security people are supposed to keep people from being right against the fence, and it's understandable why, but clearly no one cared this time since multiple walked by me and no one said anything. Maybe I looked like a real track photographer - I kind of felt like one and that was pretty cool.



The Silver Crown cars were the coolest to watch, and the perspective from the end of the front stretch was one I hadn't seen before. The cars are really fast too, I don't think I realized just how fast Silver Crown cars are. They might only have 360 engines but they make full use of it on the asphalt track. I'm not sure what the lap time difference actually was but the USF 2000 cars looked visibly quite a bit slower.

I wandered around the grounds and checked out the rest of the facility. Turn 1 has a nice grassy hill to sit on and would make a good place to watch with kids or when the grandstands are too full for comfort. The drag strip behind the oval looked like a really nice facility. I've only been to one drag strip before, out in Vegas, but this appeared to be just as nice of a setup. There were grandstands on both sides of the strip, angled slightly down the strip.





Silver Crown started out the event with single car qualifying. There were 24 cars signed in. Kody Swanson surprised no one by taking the pole. Bobby Santos III clocked in at 5th. I've watched Santos race in the Whelen Modified Tour in New England a number of times and I always like to see the northeast modified racers do well in other disciplines.

USF 2000 and Indy Pro 2000 ran features only and both went caution free. Kody Swanson, in his Indy Pro 2000 debut, won the feature by over a straightaway in a dominating victory. The racing was pretty single file for most of the two features, a little passing but they got spread out quickly and tended to stay that way. Since both cars have front and rear wings, it seemed to me that the large amount of downforce they made was too much for the surprisingly small amount of power the engines made. My guess is that the combination of high downforce and low power made it very difficult to pass.



The Silver Crown cars put on a much more exciting show. Kody Swanson shot out to the lead but there was some good back and forth racing at different parts in the field. Things got really interesting when Swanson had a mechanical failure and had to retire about half way through the race. This really opened up the race and there were some battles for the lead. Jake Swanson ended up taking the victory

A big crowd never really materialized, the grandstands seemed to have barely any people there. I guess it's on a Friday and a more interesting slate of events is on deck for tomorrow, but I would have expected Silver Crown to draw a bigger crowd. I always appreciate the history behind the series and I have a real respect for drivers who race on asphalt and dirt. Lucas Oil Raceway also has a lot of history, even including several of the top divisions of NASCAR. Though the racing wasn't as good as some other tracks I could have visited in the area, I wasn't disappointed by it.