

## 8-01-24: Terre Haute Action Track

I've been wanting to make it out to Terre Haute for a while now and was very happy to finally see it. I got rained out two years ago during Indiana Sprint Week due to ground saturation, and I know it's notorious for canceling due to even pretty light rain, so I wasn't holding out a lot of hope given the forecast leading up to it. I was considering alternate options throughout the day but the track kept posting that they were planning to run and the forecast showed more and more likelihood that the thunderstorms were going to go just south of the track, so I drove out and hoped for the best.

I got there significantly later than I otherwise would have, about an hour after gates opened, but I figured that people would likely be hesitant to come with the forecast and the possibility of being rained out made that approach make sense.

The track is in the fairgrounds and parking is plentiful, and I even parked right behind the grandstands. The grounds are open and accessible, they only check for wristbands right when you're entering the grandstand area, similar to the other fair races I've gone to on this trip. Tickets are bought at a window in a separate building, and the line got pretty long around the advertised start time.



There are tons of grandstands, a covered section towards turn 1 and two uncovered on the other end of the frontstretch. The poles in the covered stands weren't really an issue, but the seats are very shallow and as a result I chose the uncovered ones. The views are all pretty good, I slid most of the way over into

four just to have a bit more space visible if a car was to do a Brady Bacon again into one. If you're sitting down though (I was on the top row and therefore standing) the side rails would interfere with the view. There were plenty of top row seats available well after the advertised starting time, though the rain may have played into that.



It's always interesting being at a track that's right in town. I could see Ross and Best Buy right across the street. I'm much more used to tracks that are a good bit outside of town.

Like many of the other Indiana tracks, concessions were quite cheap and I love the \$6 pork tenderloin sandwiches they all have.

I wandered through the infield since they have a tunnel into it. There's almost nothing in there except for a building down by the start/finish line, so the view might actually be pretty alright. I may watch hot laps from there next time. I might have this time but I wasn't sure I'd be able to get back to my seat before qualifying started and I wanted to make sure to have a good view of everything in case there were any big flips due to the very heavy track. You can really see the banking from the infield. There's not a lot of it but it's definitely there, and seems maybe a bit progressive towards the top. They actually charge \$5 less for infield admission.





The turns have tall guardrails (raised recently after the aforementioned Brady Bacon incident) but the backstretch has big concrete blocks stacked tall painted with distinctive red, white, and blue striping. You can tell it has a lot of history behind it and I always appreciate that in a racetrack.



They had slices of tires protecting protruding edges in the concrete blocks and guardrails throughout the track, something I hadn't seen before. I suppose it's better than hitting the hard corner but it doesn't seem like as much protection as an actual tire barrier.

They had a lot of standing water on the track earlier in the day due to all the rain and did a great job getting it into a raceable state. It was very heavy but that's to be expected, and I was just glad they were willing to put in the work to get the show in tonight. They did only have two packer trucks out for most of it but they were neat looking three wheelers. They were an hour or so behind the schedule but I can't complain about that, I'm just glad I got to see the show.







There were 38 USAC national sprint cars that signed in. They fired off behind turns three and four and entered the track for wheelpack, then moved into hot laps. There were some wheelies in the middle of the turns and some wheelstands exiting turn four in particular, the track was clearly very juiced up. There also seemed to be a bump entering turn one that was unsettling the cars.



There were a couple close calls but no incidents during qualifying. Kale Drake got up on one wheel I think, and someone else bounced significantly into turn one.

The track built a cushion very low, which isn't surprising given the moisture. They brought out the packer trucks to roll it in a bit after qualifying before rolling into heats.

The cars looked really unsettled and uncomfortable throughout the heats, especially into turn one. They seemed to not want to stick to the track down the long straights and drivers seemed to be searching for grip through the wide corners. The racing was better than expected, even though it still was mostly locked down to the bottom.

There aren't any pit grandstands so I noticed the drivers coming into the stands in turn four to watch the races.

The lighting wasn't great - it was adequate but could be a lot better.

There were a couple big moments in the B main but everyone kept going and didn't bring out the caution.

The real exciting part was watching Robert Ballou in the feature. He had to go to the work area before the start of the race so had to start from the tail. Everyone else was locked to the bottom and he was all the way on the top, nearly banging the wall on both ends of the track, and he was flying through the field. In 11 laps he went from 24th to 7th, and ultimately made it up to 5th place by the end. Other people started following him up there eventually but it took quite a while and even then many of the others weren't as effective at it.

I was surprised to see the track widen out to the degree that it did given the moisture it had, and Ballou has to take a lot of the credit for that. It turned out to be an enjoyable feature with different lines and movement, which is more than I really expected given the track conditions. It put on an entertaining show and I'm excited to come back and see a race where the track has the optimal amount of moisture in it.

They opened the pits up after the race and I was able to walk out on the track, which is always fun. It had a bit of a cushion but it was pretty small. It is always cool to stand on the tracks where I just watched the races.





