

11-04-23: Stockton Dirt Track

My first stop on what has recently been an annual November trip to California was up at the Stockton Dirt Track. I'm glad they had a strong lineup of series on hand since it was hard to say no to the Western Worlds at Cocopah with USAC/CRA and ASCS. But Stockton had NARC 410s, Sprint Car Challenge Tour 360s, and Hunt Magnetos Wingless Tour 360s for an excellent triple header of sprint cars.



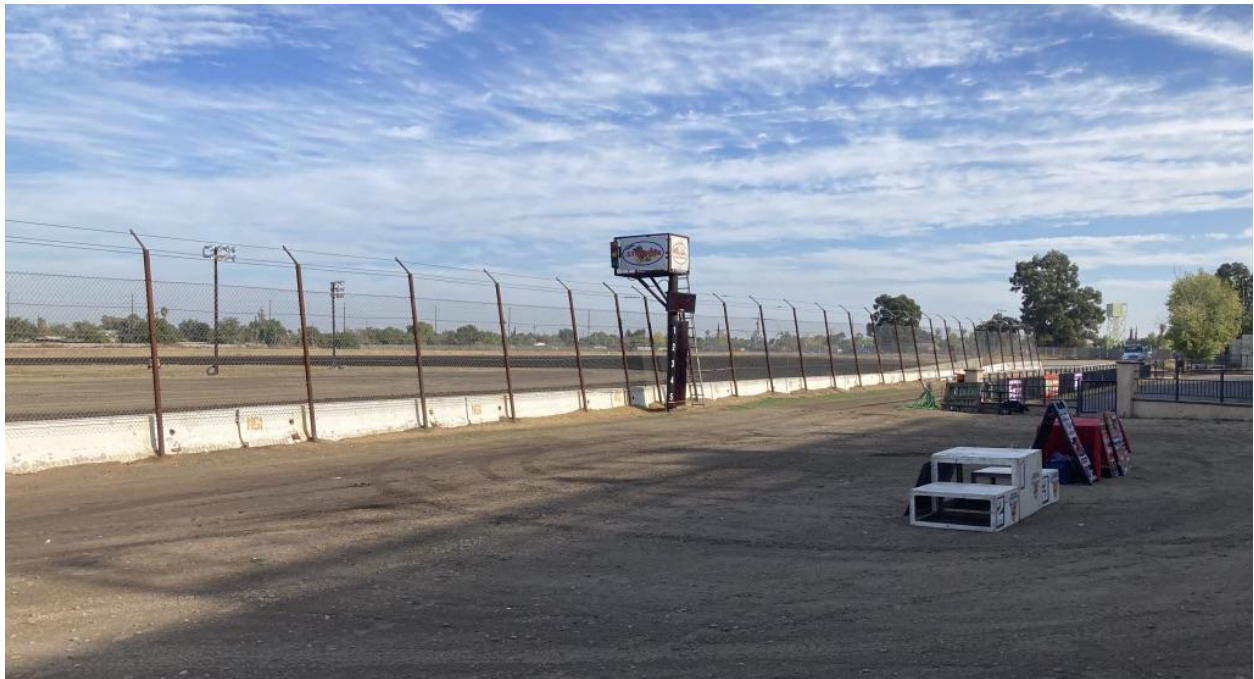
I picked up my rental car early in the morning and made the 5 hour trip up I-5 to the track. I arrived right about 3pm when gates were supposed to open. It was \$10 for parking but that just seems to be standard in California I guess. The track is situated in the fairgrounds and has a lot of space since it's built in what clearly used to be the 1 mile horse racing track. There is another small dirt track located in the fairgrounds, Delta Speedway, that looks like a micro or kart track. I wasn't able to get a good look at it but it seemed like a nice setup as well.



The grandstands are very nice, large and built with the lowest part about 15 feet off the ground. They're entirely covered but there are no support beams which is really nice, that's usually my only complaint with covered stands. There were plenty of seats available throughout the night though the crowd did fill in pretty good as it went on. I sat at the top on the exit of turn four and had a great view of everything. The stands are set back a good ways from the track and up very high, with nothing in the infield to obstruct views. I could also see the pit area and hot pit pretty well also. Even standing on the ground you were offered a pretty good view of the track. They also had a scoreboard mounted on the flagstand that also showed lap time in qualifying which I always appreciate.



The victory lane area was behind the flagstand in a large marked out section with a podium and enough room to bring all three cars right out by the stands.



Cars were on track by 3:40 for 3pm gates for wheel pack, with hot laps commencing a bit after 4. The track is a 4/10 mile that looks smaller, with a wall only on the front stretch and mild banking. It seemed to have a good bit of moisture in it and it kept getting faster throughout qualifying, and didn't take any rubber.

There were 17 winged 410s, 19 winged 360s, and 22 non-wing 360s. I was surprised but happy to see the non-wing cars with the biggest field, I guess there's a pretty good non-wing contingent out here on the West Coast and I very much appreciate that.

The non-wing cars started with hot laps and three at a time qualifying, followed by the winged 410s and 360s with hot laps and single car time trials. Buddy Kofoid was here driving a Roth car and he got the quick time.



The track was very bouncy for heat racing, especially in three and four. It sent a couple cars up on two wheels and seemed tricky to get a handle on. The non-wing cars especially got up on some big bikes but all managed to keep it going. They were able to move around on the track a bit more but it never really opened up for anyone and it was pretty single file throughout heat racing, with everyone on the bottom by the end.



Heat racing ended around 6:45, then they did 25 minutes of track prep before running the dashes for the winged series. The track was still quite bouncy and had a few cars that started to venture up the track in three and four.

The 410 main pushed off at 7:40. There were three quick cautions for slow cars that all ultimately pushed back off, then it found a rhythm. The restarts (which were double file a lot of the time, a big plus for the NARC series) seemed a little dicey at times, with cars jumping sideways and popping wheelies. There were a couple big bikes and one car got up really sideways and caused a stackup in turn four, but it ended up with surprisingly minimal damage for the cars collected. Ryan Timms in particular was popping big wheelies exiting four throughout the race.

They brought the top three cars into the victory lane area behind the flagstand, as well as the series champion since it was the last race of the year. Corey Day won the championship even after having engine trouble early in the feature.

The non-wing main pushed off at 8:20 and had the best racing of the night. Right off the start, the second place car had a big bike in two and lost several places but kept going. Several more cars got up very sideways but they all saved it, except for one car in two that did a single flip before landing back on the wheels. There was some pretty good battles for top positions

through traffic later in the race and they put on much better racing than the 410s, but I wasn't surprised by that, I'm a big fan of non-wing in general.

The winged 360s rounded out the night. It was still a real bouncy track but it was wider than in previous races, and there was at least somewhat of a second groove beginning to develop. They also did double file restarts which I appreciate.

There was no dust in any capacity throughout the night. That's nice, though I do wonder if they put in less moisture into the track if it would have widened out some or slicked off to make it more racy. As it was, it wouldn't have been particularly interesting if it wasn't so rough, causing the drivers to really have to pick and choose their line through the corners and allowing a bit of passing as a result. Still, great sightlines and a nice facility and three classes of sprint cars, so I can't complain.