

6-18-22: Bakersfield Speedway (Inner) and Kern County Raceway (Asphalt)

I ended up with an unexpected Saturday to myself in LA and decided to take the opportunity to count two new tracks. First off was Bakersfield Speedway's kart track, a 1/10 mile dirt track inside the big track. It was \$10 to get in and I got there right before the scheduled 6pm heat racing.



They parked all the karts on the backstretch of the outer track and announced that they were going to be doing single kart time trials, which frustrated me because it wasn't on the schedule (I would have played another round of disc golf had I known). At least it didn't take too long, since the kart counts were very low. There were 26 karts and mini dwarfs between 6 divisions, with 7 beginner box stocks as the highest attended class. 5 outlaw karts were the only countable class and they didn't run their heat until 7:30pm. The only particularly notable thing that happened during the racing was a senior mini dwarf that seemed to stick a throttle or something and went straight into the turn 3 k-rail, flipping back on the rear bumper and rolling onto the roof.



I left as soon as I had seen something countable and made the 30 minute drive over to Kern County Raceway, which was the primary attraction of the night since they were running the Spears Southwest Tour with all three divisions on hand, modifieds, pro late models, and super late models.

The track is right off the highway so I could see the cars on track as I was driving in which is a pretty unique experience. I got there late but there was still plenty of parking. I arrived during the middle of the pro late model feature and found a seat about 10 rows up on the turn 4 side of the grandstands. They were actually quite packed, way bigger crowd than I had expected.

It was a beautiful facility both on and off the track. The grandstands were large, all metal with seatbacks in every row. There was a large number of suites up above as well.



I was really impressed by how good the visibility was. I was 9 rows up from the bottom and I could see everything, the only piece that was obscured at all was where the flagstand covered a bit of the entrance to turn 1. This is because the track was built well down from the stands and the infield of the track was even lower. Southern California seems to have figured this out, at least between here and Perris Auto Speedway - if you're going to park haulers in the middle, set it down lower so it doesn't block half the track for the people sitting in the grandstands. Looking at you Fonda and Orange County Fair.

The track itself was very wide and high banked, with a tri-oval front stretch. Both straights had a good deal of banking as well. The mountains made a great backdrop and the big tow trucks with flags at the top of turn 1 were a neat addition. The night lighting was really good too, it lit up the entire track and grandstands, to the point that I was able to read a book without difficulty while waiting for the final feature to begin.



There were at least 12 pro late models, I'm not sure how many weren't running by the time I arrived since I got there in the middle of their feature. There was some side by side racing but mostly single file. They did throw a caution at some point that was seemingly to bunch the field up, I didn't see any other reason for it to be thrown.



The super late model feature was the main attraction and they had a field of 21 cars. The cars were staged on the front stretch and the drivers walked down through the grandstands from the midway to the track during driver introductions. They started the feature a little before 10pm.

The first lap on the backstretch someone started spinning down the track and looked like he was going to slide back up the track right in front of everyone. It seemed like it was going to collect about the whole field but everyone did some impressive evasive driving and only two cars were collected up along the outside wall in turn three.



The first part of the race had good racing at the front, no one was able to really get away. There were multiple instances of cars using the bumper to pass going into the corners, much more frequently than I would have expected for a 100 lap race.

Apparently they had a rule for this race where they would throw the caution after 27 laps of green flag racing just to bunch the field back up, which is something I hadn't heard of before. I didn't mind it, asphalt super late models are sometimes excellent but sometimes get really spread out and not much happens, so it's good to keep it interesting. I'm not sure they really needed it for this race but I'm not going to complain.

The second 27 lap segment had a great battle for second place, side by side for quite a long time. There was basically always a two wide battle somewhere on the track, and usually at the front.

There was a good deal of mechanical attrition and only 12 cars were running at the lap 86 caution. The final 15 laps had a really good battle at the front, mostly side by side. Going into turn three on the last lap, the second place car used the bumper to decidedly move the first place car out of the way and take the win. The second place finisher wasn't happy and there was a bit of a fight afterward, he was pulled away by track officials. The winner in his victory lane interview said that he wouldn't normally race that way but he was upset about getting moved out of the way in the first 20 laps by that same car he moved for the win, and said that's why he used the bumper himself at the end.

The racing was surprisingly good, some of the better super late model big track racing I've ever seen, with an unexpected bit of drama at the end. I'm now two for two for really good races with the Spears Southwest Tour so far, both here and Irwindale in February. The facility was beautiful and a lot of effort was clearly put into it, it's one of the nicer facilities I've been to. I'm much more of a dirt track fan right now so I'm not sure if I'll be back anytime soon, but it was well worth my visit and exceeded my moderate expectations. I definitely expect to visit their dirt track that's just outside turn 4 in the near future.