

5-19-23: Clinton County Speedway

When I planned to drive down to North Wilkesboro for the first NASCAR race there in 27 years I didn't have any particular plans for the drive down. That changed when I realized the USAC East Coast Sprints were going to be at the Clinton County Speedway the Friday night before, which worked out perfectly for a stop along the way.



I arrive at the track half an hour or so before hot laps. It was a part of the fairgrounds and had a good number of people in the parking lots and lots of campers as well. The track is built at the bottom of a hill, with the ticket booth up higher and the grandstands built partially on the hill as well. The sightlines are consequently quite good from pretty much everywhere. Sitting in a lawn chair at the base of the stands in turn four actually seemed to have a pretty good view even. The catch fence was tall and double layered and nicely constructed, very impressive. The only part of concern would be the restrooms, it appeared as though there were only four portapotties to serve everyone in the stands.



I ended up in the top row of the wooden stands along the front stretch, with a thin bench but I was planning to be standing most of the time anyway so that was no problem. The track has a decent bit of banking and no wall off the backstretch with what looked like a decent dropoff. There's no scoreboard but the PA was quite loud and easy to understand.



There were 7 non-wing 600cc micros, though they said they usually run winged so that might account for the low counts. There were 11 270 micros as well, plus 22 four-cylinders and 11 pro stocks for the local classes. The pro stocks weren't a class I was familiar with, they definitely seemed to have more power than a street stock but didn't look like the New York style pro stocks since they had a very different body style. There were 23 USAC East Coast Sprint Cars on hand as well, which was my primary draw and a strong field for them. It's great seeing that series so healthy.

Engine heat started right at 7, with hot laps to follow. It sounded like there was a mix of regular USAC drivers plus a number of people who usually run with the local winged 305s that took off the wing for tonight. The track itself isn't particularly wide but as hot laps progressed the racing line did move up pretty quickly. It seemed a bit tricky, with some cars pushing through the turns and others having trouble with overrotating.

Heats started with the 600s that visibly looked really fast on a track that size, I'm used to seeing them on a quarter mile or smaller. USAC had three heats and their own flagger who brought out her own set of flags to the stand. The first heat had a great extended battle for the lead, the top two side by side for multiple laps and the third car closing in. In the last corner they got three wide going down the backstretch and no one lifted going into the turn, resulting in the inside car jumping a wheel and flipping. There was another flip in the third heat, one car that jumped a wheel and got up high in turn two, keeping in the throttle and doing a sort of pirouette before coming down on the roof. He pushed back off and kept going. The racing was good throughout, they were able to move around the track and make passes and had multiple close battles.



The four cylinders did three heats of 5 laps each, the shortest I've seen for a full bodied car that I can remember. There wasn't a lot of room given and therefore a lot of contact and some pretty big hits between cars but most managed to keep going. When they did need a tow it was really slow, like a shockingly long time required to get cars hooked up to the tow truck. The racing was all over the track, with the fast changes of direction top to bottom that only front wheel drive cars can do.

USAC ran a B main, and the first car that flipped pushed off for it and was able to make the feature. The racing was a lot of fun, with two wide throughout the pack and a sustained fight for the lead.

They rolled the track but did no other track work, and thus far no dust at all which is really appreciated since I'm driving through the night afterward.

The 600 main was fairly uneventful, though again they look so fast on this track. The 270s had about a lap of two and three wide off the starts before spreading out. They can noticeably turn into the corners a lot tighter with the wings than the 600s could.

The USAC main started at 10:15 with 21 cars. There was a four lap double wide battle for the lead to open the race. The track started to blue groove just a bit on corner entry, but not much. It did narrow from the heats, and on restarts it was mostly all around the bottom, but it opened up some after a few laps and there was passing and solid racing. It was still tricky though, with one car backing into three and spinning two laps in a row and another clipping the inside wall in two and tumbling a few times.



Throughout there was no dust on me at all which was great. There was a bit of a breeze that helped, since I did see some dust in the air, but not much and there was no visibility issue.

I unfortunately left after the sprint car main because I had another 6 hours to Charlotte and wanted to get at least an hour of sleep, but I was satisfied with the show. Good sightlines, solid racing, and a nicely put together small town racetrack, definitely worth the stop.