

Bigger Bag Needed For Kentucky Mess

by John Close, www.closecalls.com

There are few things that frustrate people more than waiting in line. Honestly, you'd think we would be used to it given that studies show that those who live past 65 years old spend an average of eight years or more of their lives waiting in line for something.

That said, that average for those attending the inaugural NASCAR Sprint Cup at Kentucky Speedway might now be a little longer.

The massive traffic jams that delayed - or in some cases prevented fans from attending Saturday's race - were epic. Estimates ranged up to 20 miles in delays. Throw in long lines at the concession windows and rest rooms and it was a perfect storm of too many people trying to access too limited a space.

Think of the proverbial 10 pounds of you know what in a five pound bag and you have the picture.

Highway back ups on Interstate 71 - the main road into the track - were titanic. If you have ever been to Kentucky Speedway, you know it is pretty much in the middle of nowhere. Getting there isn't all that easy to begin with. NASCAR can talk all it wants about the track serving the metropolitan Cincinnati and Louisville markets, but those cities are a cow chip cannon shot from the facility. Want to know how remote it is? Until a year or so ago, there was nothing at the track's main freeway exit other than a couple of convenience stores and a failed motel.

Of course, everyone from Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear to Speedway Motorsports, Inc. (track owners and the same folks who brought you the 1997 Texas Motor Speedway traffic massacre) honcho Bruton Smith were in apology mode after the event. The track's general manager Mark Simendinger released a statement before the race had even come to its conclusion.

"We've had an overwhelming response to our inaugural Quaker State 400," said Simendinger. "We know we had challenges related to traffic. We're already planning improvements and looking forward to a much better situation for next year's event."

Given that Kentucky Speedway has been trolling for a Cup race since BEFORE the gates opened a decade ago, how in the world could they be overwhelmed? The place holds 100,000 fans and that many showed up Saturday. If you have sold out all the tickets ahead of time, how can you not know what the response was going to be?

Forgive us for being cynical, but we're betting you can be damn sure the speedway had plenty of concessions, beer, soft drinks and food, to serve the anticipated throng of people.

How could they swing and miss so badly on the traffic issues? Honestly, anyone who has worked previous NASCAR Nationwide and Truck Series races at this track could have predicted this problem. It has always been hard getting in - and especially out - of Kentucky Speedway for those events. More than doubling the size of those crowds should have sent up the warning flag to someone.

This shouldn't have been a surprise - not to anyone at the speedway or at the state level.

In the end, a lot of people went home disappointed. Unfortunately, it's our guess that a lot of them won't be back regardless of what changes will be made to speedway traffic and parking issues.

About The Racing

Fans attending Saturday's race at Kentucky Speedway not only suffered through a catastrophic experience on the highway, but also from a race that frankly had less than it's share of action and intrigue.

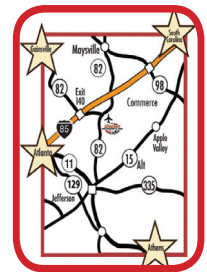
Extreme winter cold and hot griddle summers have turned the Kentucky track into a bumpy and uneven racing surface. To say the 1.5-mile oval needs repaving to improve the quality of the high-speed competition held at the track is an understatement.

Meanwhile, it was disarming to see that several areas of the track - including the entire inside back straight wall - were not equipped with SAFER Barriers.

While we can understand and somewhat live with the effects of weather

on asphalt, there is absolutely no fathoming how the speedway and NASCAR allowed these critical safety refinements to go unattended.

Perhaps a little more attention should have gone into these areas instead of wondering how to reconfigure the infield to accommodate more RV's in the infield.



2011 Schedule

- Wednesday, August 3- **RHEEM Pro Late Model-40, Trucks, Mini Stocks and Renegades**
- Saturday, August 13- **US AUTO SALES 100**
Back To School Racing Classic - GMP Pro Late Models
- Saturday, September 17- **EASY RACER/GEORGE ELLIOTT MEMORIAL- CRA Super Series**
- Saturday-Sunday, October 1-2- **2nd Annual Georgia Bluesfest**
- Saturday, October 15- **Jackson County MegaFest**
- Thursday-Sunday, November 10-13- **28th-Annual World Crown 300**



www.GreshamMotorsportsPark.com