

- Three Central Pennsylvania Dirt Tracks Among A Few Sporting Events Conducted This Past Weekend - Coronavirus Pandemic Forces Race Cancellation Worldwide

By **STEVE BARRICK**
An invisible virus is wreaking worldwide havoc, causing widespread illnesses, deaths, and upending lives. In response to government gathering size bans, logistical planning or personal choice, major sporting events including auto racing events in the United States were either canceled or postponed this past weekend.

Three Central Pennsylvania speedways, however, were able to host events over the weekend along with a handful across the country. Lincoln, Port Royal and Williams Grove were able to host their events with gathering limitations only suggested, not mandated.

A dirt Late Model race in Georgia was also held along with a 360 Sprint Car race in California where spectators were limited to 250 or less.

Other major sporting events either canceled or postponed include the Masters golf tournament in Augusta, GA, The NCAA 'March Madness' Basketball Tournament, and the Boston Marathon.

The National Basketball Association and the National Hockey League suspended their seasons until further notice. Major League Soccer suspended games for 30 days.

Major League Baseball has halted Spring Training and has announced an unspecified delay in the start of the 2020 season.

Broadway shows in New

York, Disney World, Disneyland and Universal Studios are all closed until further notice.

Casinos in Las Vegas were closed this past weekend and Atlantic City were closed at the beginning at 8:00 p.m Monday evening.

Last week, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus a pandemic.

The virus first identified in Wuhan China, the official name is coronavirus disease 2019, abbreviated as COVID-19. In COVID-19, 'CO' stands for 'corona,' 'VI' for 'virus,' and 'D' for disease.

There are many types of human coronaviruses including some that commonly cause mild upper-respiratory tract illnesses. COVID-19 is a new disease, caused by a novel (or new) coronavirus that has not previously been seen in humans.

There are still a lot of unknowns about this disease including will it slow down in the summer months? At this time, it is not known whether the spread of COVID-19 will decrease when the weather becomes warmer. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and investigations are ongoing.

INDYCAR: On Friday, IndyCar announced it had canceled its St. Petersburg, FL March 15 season opener and the next three races on its 2020 schedule.

Citing "regular communica-

tion with our event promoters, health officials, and the city administrations in our respective race markets" the decision was made to cancel all INDYCAR Series events through April.

In addition to the St. Petersburg opener, races in Birmingham, AL, Long Beach, CA and Austin, TX canceled and will not be rescheduled.

The loss of the first four races means that the INDYCAR season will open on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway road course on May 9 followed on May 24 by the Indianapolis 500.

NASCAR: NASCAR postponed the race events at Atlanta Motor Speedway this weekend and Homestead-Miami Speedway next weekend. (See story

below for an update from NASCAR at press time)

In a statement, NASCAR cited a concern for public safety and for its own competitors

"We believe this decision is in the best interest of the safety and well-being of our fans, competitors, officials and everyone associated with our sport. We will continue to monitor this

dynamic situation as we assess future race events," the statement read.

A plan had been put together to host the Trucks and Cup in a one day show in Atlanta. The events were planned to be held without fans in attendance. Practice was to be eliminated with qualifying followed by both features in front of a lim-

NASCAR Cup Weekends, Whelen Modified Tour Postponed For Next Eight Weeks, Racing To Resume In May

On Monday evening, NASCAR issued an updated statement regarding its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. All NASCAR Cup race weekends have been postponed on the schedule for the next eight weeks. According to NASCAR's web-site, the first three Whelen Modified Tour races have also been postponed until a later date.

Quoting a prepared NASCAR release, "The health and safety of our fans, industry and the communities in which we race is our most important priority, so in accordance with recent CDC guidance, NASCAR is currently postponing all race events through May 3rd, with plans to return to racing in Martinsville.

"We appreciate the patience of our fans and we look forward to returning to the race track. We intend to hold all 36 races this season, with future rescheduling soon to be determined as we continue to monitor this situation closely with public health officials and medical experts.

"What is important now transcends the world of sports and our focus is on everyone's safety and well-being as we navigate this challenging time together."

This statement was NASCAR Cup oriented; whether this affects NASCAR Weekly Racing Series tracks or other NASCAR Touring Series was unclear.

A check of NASCAR's Whelen Modified schedule found the first three events postponed. No makeup dates has been deter-

mined, but reportedly an effort will be made to host the events at a later date.

The opener at South Boston, VA scheduled for March 22 was postponed over the weekend.

Thompson announced on Monday they will not hold the scheduled NASCAR Test & Tune scheduled for Saturday, March 21. The 46th annual Icebreaker scheduled for April 3-5 has not been cancelled but postponed.

Competitors should note that there will be a practice day attached to the rescheduled Icebreaker, and any drivers who signed up for the March 21 test will be given top priority for a practice date that is to be determined.

Thompson announced that effective immediately, their staff will work from home to whatever extent they can. To connect with Thompson staff, you may also email info@thompson-speedway.com.

Stafford Motor Speedway's management reacted Monday evening to the NASCAR announcement that canceled racing through the end of April, shelving the track's Spring Sizzler planned for April 26. The track issued this statement:

"Race fans, we are aware of the NASCAR announcement postponing all events till May 3. We will have more information on our early season schedule. We ask that you please be patient at this time as these circumstances are out our control. This too shall pass, we'll be back on track soon."

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Pit Gates @ 3:30pm | Grandstand Gates 4pm

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ULMS LATE MODELS
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Gates Open 1pm • Racing at 4pm • Adults \$20
Students (w/ ID) 13-18 \$10 • Children 12 & Under FREE • Pits \$32

SUNDAY, MARCH 22 - 2PM

Short Track Super Series for
Big Block & Small Block Modifieds

\$5,000 To Win

40 LAPS - \$400 START

ULMS Super Late Models
\$3,000 To Win

Gates Open 11am • Racing at 2pm • Adults \$25
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Modifieds - \$5,000 To Win
plus Sportsman Modifieds \$1,000 To Win
Modified & Sportsman Rules Will Mirror Short Track Super Series Rules

Adult General Admission \$20 • Students 12-17 \$15
Ages 11 & Under FREE • Pits \$40

SUNDAY, MARCH 29 - 2PM

March Mayhem
410 Sprints & Super Late Models

\$4,000 To Win 410 Sprints
\$2,000 To Win Late Models

Adult General Admission \$20 • Students 12-17 \$15
Ages 11 & Under FREE • Pits \$30

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