

Day One

Sunday, November 1, 2020

Opening Day of Practice

Welcome to the 2020 Open-Wheels 500 Mile Race presented by Mitchell Transmissions. These Daily Trackside Reports are compiled for the media's use, as well as for official record-keeping for Open-Wheels Motorsports Sanctioning. Tanner Watkins, president of the Open-Wheels 500 Mile Race, is here to assist you and answer your questions during the month of November.

This is the second edition of the Open-Wheels 500 Mile Race Daily Trackside Report, but the tradition of these reports comes via the Indianapolis 500. The Daily Trackside Report was first distributed at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 1967, and this year's event featured the 54th edition of the "DTR." As mentioned on the first page of the 1967 Daily Trackside Report, "This press information has been compiled as an added source of your information in your coverage of the '500.' It is our sincere wish that it will be of assistance in your assignment."

Timing and scoring links may be found at <https://open-wheels.com/timing/> where up-to-the-second lap times and speeds will be posted.

Feature stories, reports, driver quotes and notes, and photos will be posted on the Open-Wheels.com 500 Mile Race Media Site, <https://open-wheels.com/media/> where detailed information, including media advisories and audio/video clippings, are also posted. Updates will also be provided on Twitter via @OpenWheels500. Media information will also be distributed via the official Open-Wheels.com 500 Mile Race Discord server. Contact Open-Wheels Motorsports Sanctioning (Media@Open-Wheels.com) to be added to the Discord server.

SUNDAY'S SCHEDULE (All Times Eastern)

10:00 AM	Optional Drivers Meeting
12:00 PM	Welcome Press Conference
2:00-9:00 PM	Open-Wheels 500 Mile Race Practice (OWTV)
8:00 PM	<i>Today at the 500</i> Live Airing (OWTV)

ENTRY UPDATES

- A handful of drivers are not eligible to take to the track as they have not accepted the league invite to Open-Wheels Motorsports Sanctioning on the iRacing site. These drivers are: #82 Nathan Byrd, #81 Frederick Campbell, #38 Brian Greenlee, #222 Christian Macrelli, #718 Michael O'Hora, #35 Hunter Smith, and #77 Thales Toledo.

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OPEN-WHEELS 500 PRACTICE KICKS OFF WITH SUNDAY'S OPENING DAY

Finally, after 12 months of waiting the weekend is finally here – Opening Day at the Open-Wheels 500 has arrived! Tomorrow, the stars and cars of the World's Greatest Sim Race will take to the 2.5-mile Indianapolis Motor Speedway oval on iRacing to kick off the 2020 Open-Wheels 500 presented by Mitchell Transmissions.

With only 33 spots in the starting field up for grabs, the entry list of 110 drivers will have their work cut out for them as the first week of practice and qualifications unfolds over the next eight days.

Festivities on Opening Day kick off with a private driver's meeting at 10:00 AM Eastern, followed by the Opening Day press conference at 12:00 PM – live on Open-Wheels.com/TV. That sets the stage for practice – which goes green at 2:00 PM – followed by the first airing of Today at the 500 at 8:00 PM. Both practice and Today at the 500 will also be found at Open-Wheels.com/TV.

Following Opening Day is a full week of action leading into Qualifications Weekend presented by Pit Lane Parley. Practices will be held from 1:00 to 9:00 PM Eastern on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday – all live on Open-Wheels.com/TV – while airings of Today at the 500 will be shown live at 8:00 PM on both Tuesday and Friday.

On Thursday, RaceSpot TV will produce a live, one-hour Qualifications Draw Special where drivers will learn of their position in the initial qualifications order that kicks off Saturday's Pole Day runs. That show will begin at 8:00 PM Eastern on RaceSpot TV's YouTube page.

The first week all builds into Pole Day on Saturday, November 7. The first run of the day will roll off at approximately 6:10 AM Eastern, and qualifications attempts will be made live throughout the day on Open-Wheels.com/TV (until 5:00 PM) as well as RaceSpot TV (from 5:00 to 5:50 PM). The Pit Lane Parley Pole Award winner will be crowned at the end of the day on Saturday while the rest of the field sweats their way through one more day of qualifications.

Sunday, November 8 will bring Bump Day – the final 12 hours of first-come, first-served qualifications which will end with the field of 33 drivers being set. The fastest 33 make the show, and again, final hour coverage of Bump Day will be shown live on RaceSpot TV (beginning at 5:00 PM ET) while the rest of day two qualifications can be found at Open-Wheels.com/TV (6:00 AM to 5:00 PM).

With qualifications out of the day, drivers will practice again from 1:00 to 9:00 PM on Tuesday (November 10) and Thursday (November 12) before hitting the track for the final time on Saturday, November 14 at 12:30 PM on Open-Wheels.com/TV.

Race day for the 2020 Open-Wheels 500 presented by Mitchell Transmissions is Sunday, November 15. The Today at the 500 Pre-Race Show will begin at 9:00 AM Eastern (live on Open-Wheels.com/TV) which will carry all of the traditional ceremonies – such as Taps, the National Anthem, Back Home Again in Indiana, and more! Following the pre-race show is the live, worldwide broadcast of the second annual Open-Wheels 500 on RaceSpot TV – their coverage beginning at 11:30 AM Eastern with a scheduled green flag of 11:45 AM.

Stay tuned to Open-Wheels.com for in-depth coverage of the 2020 Open-Wheels 500 presented by Mitchell Transmissions, as well as our social media channels for the latest news and updates on this year's '500'.

OPEN-WHEELS 500 MILE RACE PRACTICE

2:00 PM – **GREEN**. The Speedway is open for practice for all entrants.

2:04 PM – Chad Irvine is the first driver to hit the track for practice today, piloting a Indy Eleven Professional Soccer Honda for IXI Racing. Irvine hails from Indiana and is a newcomer to the Open-Wheels 500.

In Indianapolis 500 history, the best finish for the “First On Track” driver since 1984 is second place – twice. Marco Andretti finished runner-up to Sam Hornish Jr. in 2006, and Helio Castroneves was second to Ryan Hunter-Reay in 2014, both after being the first on track.

2:24 PM – Filippo Filippini moves to the top of the leaderboard with a best lap of 39.274 seconds – a 229.159 mph lap.

3:20 PM – California club driver Christopher Mitrision puts his BuzzinHornets Chevrolet at the top of the board with a 230.994 mph lap (38.962s). Mitrision is the second driver into the 38-second bracket after AJ Musselman went sub-39 earlier in the session.

3:21 PM – A total of 17 drivers have posted times thus far in practice and 18 cars have been presented at the Speedway today.

3:25 PM – Eric Hodel is the new leader on the speed charts with a lap at 38.921 mph. Hodel hails from the Northwest club and drives for Hodel eSports in a Dallara IR-18 Chevrolet.

3:55 PM – With just over five hours remaining in practice, Hodel continues to lead the way ahead of Mitrision, Filippini, Musselman, and Jesper Öhrman from 3-Crowns Racing.

3:56 PM – Öhrman has the most laps completed thus far in practice – a total of 88 through the first two hours of on-track availability.

4:28 PM – Musselman moves to the top of the board with a new best lap of 38.737 seconds. Musselman hails from Arizona and is driving for Turn 4 Racing in a Dallara IR-18 Chevrolet this year.

5:07 PM – Eight drivers have posted best lap times under the 39-second mark, and 27 cars have presented themselves on the pit lane thus far in practice.

5:59 PM – While the first few hours of practice featured many single-car runs, considerably more drafting is occurring at the Speedway currently as drivers test their race trim setups.

6:10 PM – Dave Steadman is the first driver to complete 200 laps in today's practice session, sitting inside the top-20 on speed thus far.

6:40 PM – While Musselman remains at the top of the charts with a best lap speed of 232.336 miles per hour, a total of 35 drivers have set times thus far in practice.

7:00 PM – Four drivers have completed at least 160 laps today in practice – Steadman, Musselman, Öhrman, and Pierre Bourdon.

8:10 PM – A new fastest time has been set in this practice – Matt Hollibaugh goes 38.463 seconds (233.991 mph) for a new unofficial lap record at the Open-Wheels 500. Last year's unofficial (meaning non-qualifications or race lap) high water mark was set by Marco Aurelio Brasil with a lap at 38.516 seconds.

8:40 PM – New practice record, again! Christopher Demeritt of Broken Aero/I5G/Apex Racing Team moves the bar a bit higher as he goes for a best lap speed of 234.022 mph – a lap at 38.458 to narrowly steal the top honors from Hollibaugh. Demeritt has completed 102 laps today in practice.

8:55 PM – Just before the gun sounds to end practice, Brendan Lichtenberg steals the spotlight from his teammate with a scorching lap of 234.809 miles per hour (38.329 seconds) to again raise the bar of the unofficial practice lap record.

9:00 PM – Practice has concluded for Opening Day. Some random notes:

For the second year in a row, the fourth-fastest driver at the end of Opening Day was an "AJ." Last year it was AJ Burton, and this year it is AJ Musselman.

Chad Irvine was the first driver on-track today, though it was not in the chassis he indicated on the entry list. He is the only driver to register for the race with a Dallara IR-05 chassis, though he piloted a Dallara DW-12 for the first laps of the day on Opening Day.

Christopher Demeritt had the fastest trap speed of any driver today at 243.3 miles per hour. Second-fastest was Lichtenberg at 242.9, and third-quick was Hollibaugh at 241.8. Musselman also went over 240 at 240.1.

A total of 41 cars were on-track today, and 41 cars are at the Speedway in total. All but two drivers to record times in Sunday's session piloted a Dallara IR-18 chassis – Chad Irvine and Stephen Aboagye drove Dallara DW-12 machines. There were zero yellow flag periods. The high today was 78 degrees Fahrenheit and the track temperature began the session at 112 degrees Fahrenheit, ending the session at 115 degrees Fahrenheit. Winds were out of the North at 2 mph.

Cars on the track today (in order of speed): #10 Brendan Lichtenberg, #144 Christopher Demeritt, #02 Matt Hollibaugh, #53 AJ Musselman, #87 Jesper Öhrman, #90 Eric Hodel, #61 Micael Hagstrom, #21 Logan Simmons, #29 Christopher Mitrision, #924 Filippo Filippini, #06 Ryan Schuld, #59 Evan Adams, #52 Lewis Woodall, #39 Hugo Olsson, #63 Fábio Vianna, #5 Oliver Silva, #32 Chris Wilhite, #845 Andrew Marquez, #26 Aaron Roufs, #8 Nate Burck, #98 Pierre Bourdon, #72 Dave Steadman, #85 Jalberillo Garcia, #89 Joshua Huffine, #30 Jimmil Hawkins, #96 Manuel Gomez, #09 William Kempf, #777 Christopher Kresge, #36 Eric Peterson, #18 Brandon Ehrhardt, #33 Taylor Cox, #97 DJ Johnson, #31 Tyson Landis, #169 Richard Valli, #515 Aaron Allen, #19 Craig Hawkins, #12 Raul Alvarez, #7 Austin Espitee, #68 Chad Irvine, #57 Chris Cahoe, and #8 Stephen Aboagye.

FASTEST TIMES/SPEEDS OF THE DAY

Pos.	Car	Name	Team	Time	Speed (mph)
1.	10	Brendan Lichtenberg	Broken Aero w/ I5G and Apex Racing	38.329s	234.809
2.	144	Christopher Demeritt	Broken Aero w/ I5G and Apex Racing	38.458	234.022
3.	02	Matt Hollibaugh	All American iRacers w/ Gonzalez	38.463	233.991
4.	53	AJ Musselman	Turn 4 Racing	38.737	232.336
5.	87	Jesper Öhrman	3-Crowns Racing	38.793	232.001
6.	90	Eric Hodel	Hodel eSports	38.921	231.238
7.	61	Micael Hagstrom	Team Players Hagstrom Racing	38.928	231.196
8.	21	Logan Simmons	Iconic Motorsports	38.929	231.190
9.	29	Christopher Mitrision	BuzzinHornets	38.958	231.018
10.	924	Filippo Filippini	North Sim Racing	38.967	230.965

POSTED TO OPEN-WHEELS.COM

LICHTENBERG TOPS FIRST OPEN-WHEELS 500 PRACTICE ON SUNDAY

Following a year-long wait, preparations for the second annual Open-Wheels 500 presented by Mitchell Transmissions began on Sunday. In preparation for the return of the November 15 iRacing event, a six-hour practice session was held over the weekend – 18 days after the initial test session in mid-October.

When all was said and done, it was Brendan Lichtenberg leading the way after posting a best lap of 234.809 miles per hour (38.329 seconds) on the 2.5-mile Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

“We really wanted to make today an acclimation day and a feel-good day, and I feel great,” he emphasized following the session.

“We’d been preparing prior to today, but until you get that first session you’re enveloped by a fog of war and don’t know exactly where you are. After today, we know where we are and we look forward to logging more laps.”

Last year, Lichtenberg worked his way up from 30th on the grid to finish 13th at the inaugural running.

Slotting in behind Lichtenberg – just .129 of a second off his best time – was his teammate and fellow former iRacing Indianapolis 500 winner Christopher Demeritt, who was the only other driver to eclipse the 234 mile-per-hour mark on their best lap.

In all, 15 drivers posted laps in excess of 230 miles per hour, with the top 29 drivers being separated by just .996 of a second.

Among the notable drivers absent from Sunday’s opening practice were last year’s race winner Michele Costantini and pole winner Yang Ou. Although most of the field has opted for the spec Dallara IR-18 chassis, other cars are represented in the field.

During Sunday’s practice, IXI Racing’s Chad Irvine was the first driver on track in his Dallara DW-12, finishing 39th-fastest.

Representing one of seven independent efforts within the 110 entries, Stephen Aboagye rounded out the field, clocking a best lap of 41.237 (218.251 mph).

POST-PRACTICE DRIVER QUOTES

P1. BRENDAN LICHTENBERG (No. 10 Broken Aero with I5G/Apex Racing Team Dallara IR-18 Honda): "We really wanted to make today an acclimation day and a feel-good day, and I feel great. We'd been preparing prior to today but until you get that first session of practice you're enveloped by a fog of war and don't know exactly where you are. After today we know where we are, and we look forward to logging more laps."

P3. MATT HOLLIBAUGH (No. 02 All American iRacers with Gonzalez Motorsports Dallara IR-18 Chevrolet): "I unfortunately got there later than I would've liked, so I just spent most of my session trying to go for glory runs to be toward the top of the pylon. I'm still really proud of it. Hopefully I can make better time getting into the session to get some race practice in, because AAiR's chosen race set pretty quick in clean air!"

P4. AJ MUSSELMAN (No. 53 Turn 4 Racing Dallara IR-18 Chevrolet): "Opening Day was a productive one for the #53 AJM Consulting / AJMusselman.com Chevy Powered Dallara. I started the day running Q runs, just trying to find the right balance and line. An hour into the session, the track got pretty busy, and it wasn't easy getting full Q runs in without getting a tow from another car, so I focused on race trim for a bit and raced in a pack of 3-4 cars - I learned a lot and finalized my race setup pretty quick. Not sure what the cutoff will be in Qualifications, but I'll do everything I can this week to get every tenth!"

P5. JESPER ÖHRMAN (No. 87 3-Crowns Racing Dallara IR-18 Honda): "As always, it's a joy getting into the car and turning laps around The Brickyard. Got some good data today, looking forward to next weekend!"

P6. ERIC HODEL (No. 90 Hodel eSports Dallara IR-18 Chevrolet): "Was not expecting a top-10 finish in practice on day one. This is one of the first big events I have entered. Car felt good; I haven't had a lot of time to prep for the event having just moved back home to Washington state from Nevada. Had to do both qualify runs and race runs, because I do not know with my work schedule if I'll make another practice before qualifying. Overall, (I'm) just happy to be here and participate in this amazing event. Being an independent team will mean a lot more work, since I'm not the greatest setup person. Also looking forward to participating in the Veterans 100 and the Pit Stop Competition."

P7. MICAEL HAGSTROM (No. 61 Team Players Hagstrom Racing Dallara IR-18 Honda): "Well to be honest it feels both up and down (to finish top-10 on day one). The final race at the Majors Series Pro European was on Sunday, and it was not the ultimate preparation for this Open-Wheels 500 race. We are 100% focused on this event and the qualify at this moment. We are not that satisfied with our setup, but we are working every day to try to reach 38.500 in our qualify setup cause I believe that's going to be the limit of the 33 top drivers. The times we have got is more or less draft times, so we need to find the speed. As another driver said in an interview, I am much better in race than in qualify so fingers crossed and let's see what happens."

P8. LOGAN SIMMONS (No. 21 Iconic Motorsports Dallara IR-18 Chevrolet): "Today was just about getting use to driving the IR18 again after a long break. so coming out top 10 on day one is nice, but I don't think it will be very indicative of Qualifying pace."

P10. FILIPPO FILIPPINI (No. 924 North Sim Racing Dallara IR-18 Chevrolet): ""My astonishing lap was fortuitous; I was on a Q-simulation and got a draft... It's not my cup of tea, men"

TUESDAY'S SCHEDULE (All Times Eastern)

1:00-9:00 PM	Open-Wheels 500 Mile Race Practice (OWTV)
8:00 PM	<i>Today at the 500</i> Airing (OWTV)