

Augusta Motor Speedway

How long does it take to mow your lawn?



How long does it take to mow your lawn? A half hour? Maybe an hour? Now think, how long would it take you to mow the lawn if your mower raced at speeds of 30 miles per hour?

Not everyone has a 25 horsepower lawn mower that can travel at speeds in excess of 30 miles per hour, but if you want to see one visit the Augusta Motor Speedway in Augusta, West Virginia, during the racing season. At Augusta, the enjoyment created by competition and

Augusta, West Virginia

Written by: **Dan Whetzel**

Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**

tinkering with riding mowers creates old time fun that is guaranteed to bring smiles. “Souped up” mowers raced by 16 to 60 year old drivers roar around the track to the cheers of a packed house. This is a wild sport that enthusiasts and low-geared weekend warriors readily relate to; “I wonder how long it would take me to cut the grass if I had one of those mowers?”

Competitive lawn mower racing has grown in popularity, and there are currently 45 local clubs chartered by the United States Lawn Mower Racing Association (USLMRA), the governing body of such events. Regional racing events have been held in the Winchester, Virginia area for a number of years and have recently expanded

Top left: The “General Lee” built and owned by Jeff Lamb.

Below: Overhead valve mowers pacing, ready for start.



to the Augusta Motor Speedway under the promotional leadership of Terry and Susan Carlyle. The venue has attracted enthusiasts from the Tri-State region who are attracted to the twice monthly racing schedule.

One of the regulars at Augusta Motor Speedway is Jeff Lamb, a resident of Winchester, Virginia. Why does Jeff race lawn mowers? “My buddies raced mowers, so I had to have one. I started driving, and then my dad began helping me. We have worked together on building and racing mowers since 2006.” Their efforts have paid off because the father and son team has captured 3 circuit championships and 77 feature races.

Modifying the mowers can be time consuming and expensive. According to Jeff, “Some drivers will use bigger pistons, drill out the carburetor jets, use hotter fuel, mount aluminum wheels, and buy special tires and other equipment. Actually, everyone’s mower is a little different because we all try different things to get more speed.”

Innovation is a major part of the fun in building and racing the mowers. One invention mounted on Larry’s mower was born of necessity. “I was thrown off the mower many times because of the speeds we drive. So, we took an arm from an old metal chair to make what we call a ‘hip catcher.’ We welded the chair arm to the frame and it keeps me in the seat.”

A modification called “staggering” the tires is commonly practiced by drivers. “We stagger the tires to get the mower turning with the track. I run 5 inch tires on the left side and an 8 inch set on the right side.”

The speeds reached by the mowers can be impressive, more than 50 miles per hour in extreme cases although 30 miles per hour is more common. The 1/5 mile banked clay track at Augusta Motor Speedway allows for speeds at the lower range of the spectrum.

Jerry Miller, a lawn mower driver and racing promoter from Winchester, was instrumental in bringing the events to Augusta. He was also involved in creating rules for the crowd pleasing events. “Basically, we don’t have many rules in the Outlaw Division. This is real redneck racing; that’s what everyone around here calls it. The few rules we have are for safety reasons.”

The rules established by Jerry and his brother are part of the Appalachian Blue Ridge Northern Virginia Outlaw Racing Mower League (ABNORML). The local leagues’ rules are not necessarily the same as USMLRA. For example, the national organization limits the horsepower rating to 20, but ABNORML permits drivers to run with 25 horsepower engines. Other rules govern height, width, length of the mower, and kill switches. All cutting blades must be removed. In addition to the Outlaw group, there are two more restrictive divisions called Overhead Valve (OV) and Valve in Block (VIB).

In addition to lawn mower racing, the Augusta Motor Speedway features a full summer schedule of Go Kart racing in multiple divisions. Terry Carlyle, spokesperson for the speedway, noted, “The Go Kart races are really competitive and the drivers and crews take it seriously.” Divisions include Flat Karts, Champ Karts, Cyclones, Quarter Midgets, and others.

Stock 350 Flat Cars ready for start.



Go Karts are governed by rules and must be equipped with roll bars, seat belts, and limited horsepower engines. The fuel is a hot burning alcohol that increases the 5 horsepower engine's performance.

Crowd size has increased at the Augusta Motor Speedway over the past two years. According to Terry Carlyle, "The new clay track has been well received by fans and drivers. One of the other factors in the increased size of crowds has been the addition of lawn mower racing that we have twice a month."

The Augusta Motor Speedway operates through the efforts and goodwill of volunteers who enjoy the family oriented events. The Ruritan Club operates the concessions and has been able to support scholastic scholarships and community

Right: Track Champion, Trever Larrick leading Nathan Davis in Black Plate Champ class.

Below: Dalton Dillman working on his Cyclone Miniature late model.

service projects because of profits realized at the races. "The money is put back into the community, and everyone benefits," according to Susan Carlyle. "I see the fun kids and families have at the race track. The races are an inexpensive way for families to enjoy themselves. We stress the family atmosphere at Augusta Speedway with reasonable admission prices and a no alcohol policy. We want everyone to come out and have a good time." For additional information, see www.Augustamotorspeedway.com.





2013 Augusta Motor Speedway Schedule

APRIL

Friday, 5th Practice
 Sunday, 7th 1st Point Race – Karts & Lawn Mowers
 Friday, 19th Karts, Cyclones & Bicycles
 Sunday, 28th Karts, Lawn Mowers & Bicycles

MAY

Sunday, 12th Karts, Lawn Mowers & Bicycles
 Friday, 17th Karts, Cyclones & Bicycles
 Sunday, 26th Karts and Cove View Shoot Out

JUNE

Sunday, 9th Karts, Lawn Mowers & Bicycles
 Friday, 14th Karts, Cyclones & Bicycles
 Sunday, 30th Karts, Lawn Mowers & Bicycles

JULY

Friday, 5th Karts, Lawn Mowers & Bicycles – Double Points
 Sunday, 21st Karts and Cove View Shoot Out

AUGUST

Friday, 9th Karts, Lawn Mowers & Bicycles
 Wednesday, 14th Karts, Lawn Mowers & Bicycles
 Friday, 23rd Karts, Lawn Mowers & Bicycles – Double Points

SEPTEMBER

Sunday, 1st Karts, Lawn Mowers & Bicycles
 Friday, 6th Karts, Cyclones & Bicycles
 Sunday, 15th Karts, Lawn Mowers & Bicycles (Last Point Race)
 Sunday, 22nd Karts

OCTOBER

Saturday, 12th Mountaineer Clash
 Sunday, 13th Mountaineer Clash



Top left: Outlaw Class mower.

Top right: Future racers start young.

Above: Jeff Lamb and his General Lee mower, ready to race.

Left: Jacob Chroussis in his #88 Junior Sportsman Class Flat Car.