

the sports

100 yards per second'

Indy cars return to TWS

By MARK PATTERSON
Battalion Sports Staff

With beer being guzzled as fast as fuel, the Coors 200 will kick off Sunday afternoon at Texas World Speedway, led by local favorite A.J. Foyt.

Foyt, winner of the last three races held at the speedway, is coming off of a double win in his last outing. Competing at Ontario Motor Speedway in Ontario, Calif., two weeks ago, the Houston native won both the stock car and Indy car divisions. With the two victories, he became the point leader in USAC competition this year.

The drivers will compete for 400 USAC points in their last race before the Indianapolis 500. Last season Foyt captured the Texas Grand Prix and the Texan 250 at Texas World Speedway.

In his last appearance at TWS, Foyt won the Aggie 250 held March 11. Foyt won a protested victory over Freddie Fryar of Beaumont.

Driving stock cars, Fryar attempted to file a protest claiming that Foyt took a pit stop under the yellow caution flag and then returned to the track ahead of Fryar. USAC officials refused to hear the protest and Foyt was awarded the victory.

In last year's Coors 200, the first held at TWS, pole sitter Danny Ongais came from behind to take the win. Mario Andretti jumped off to an early lead but was overtaken by Foyt on the fourth lap. Gordon Johncock took the lead from Foyt on the fifth and held it through the 19th, when Andretti forged to the front again.

Foyt dropped out of the race on the 38th lap and Andretti, Johncock and Ongais battled for the lead. Ongais edged ahead on the 46th lap and held on for the victory.

Tom Bigelow will be driving for the second time at TWS. In Bigelow's first appearance, in last year's Coors 200, the Wisconsin native finished 12th, completing 90 of the 100 laps on the two-mile oval. Bigelow is one of the many drivers making the transition from stock cars to Indy-type cars for Sunday's race.

"It usually takes me about four or five laps to refamiliarize myself with this type of car," Bigelow said about the transition for Sunday's race from stock to Indy cars. "You need to get your mind going in the right direction."

"All I'll try to do is stay up with the leaders the first few laps. That way if there is a bad pit stop, or something goes wrong with the leader, you're right in it."

Mike Connor, Speedway vice-president, tabs Foyt as this year's favorite.

"The Speedway is in his backyard," Connor said about Foyt. "The Indy cars have run one race this year and A.J. won that one."

"But he didn't blow the other drivers out. He sat on the pole position at the start but entered the first turn seventh. Gary Bettenhausen led the first 25 laps but cut a tire. Foyt went on to win but it wasn't an easy victory for A.J."

Missing from this year's line-up are the top three finishers last year: Ongais, Tom Sneva and Gordon Johncock. All have chosen to pass up TWS. Connor says he doesn't mind a bit that Johncock choose to stay home.

"I could care less if Johncock ever comes back," Connor said. "He choose the race here last August (Texas Grand Prix) to stage a protest of the 4-cylinder engine."

"He got upset when he found out that he had to qualify for the race before he could run in it. So he went out and qualified at 78 m.p.h. And that was for an Indy car race."

Though the speeds at TWS usually reach a little higher than Johncock's 78 m.p.h., the speeds of this year's Coors 200 will be lower than last year's. USAC has imposed rules that limit the speed of the cars and switched the emphasis to the driver's ability.

"USAC has imposed new boost restrictions (manifold pressure) on the cars," Connor said. "It's a good rule and the effects will be seen in this weekend's race."

"It was done for three reasons. First, for safety. The speeds will be lowered because of the changes. Second, it will equalize the competition. There will be more new driv-

ers on the scene. And third, it's more economical. Drivers won't need big-money backers in order to compete."

The changes were shown at Ontario where Foyt won the pole position, qualifying at 188 m.p.h. Last year, Tom Sneva qualified for the pole at Ontario at 202 m.p.h.

"The speeds will be down and the drivers won't be able to just point their cars," Connor said. "Few people can comprehend that these cars travel 100 yards, the length of a football field, in one second. With the restrictions and the lowered speeds, the driver has time to make

a decision on when to pass and when not to.

"You're not going to see two guys jump out ahead and run away with this year's race. There will definitely be more competition than last year."

Time trials for Sunday's race are scheduled to begin at 2:30 p.m. Saturday.

Also on this weekend's race card are the mini-Indy cars. The small cars will hold their race preceding the running of the Coors 200. The mini-Indy cars are scheduled to begin qualifying runs Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

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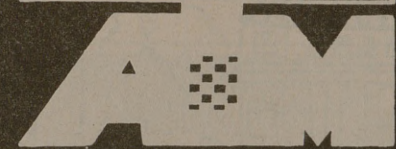


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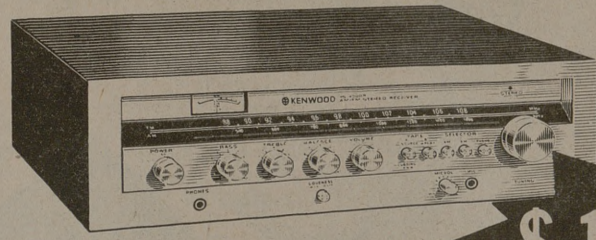
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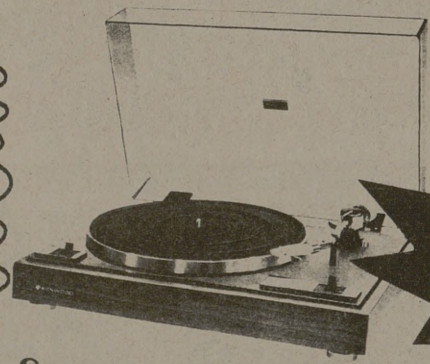
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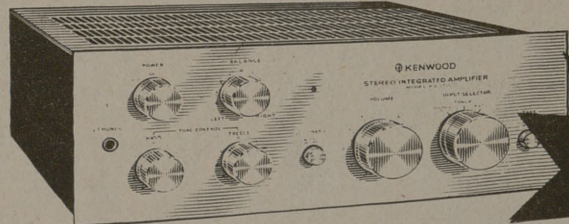
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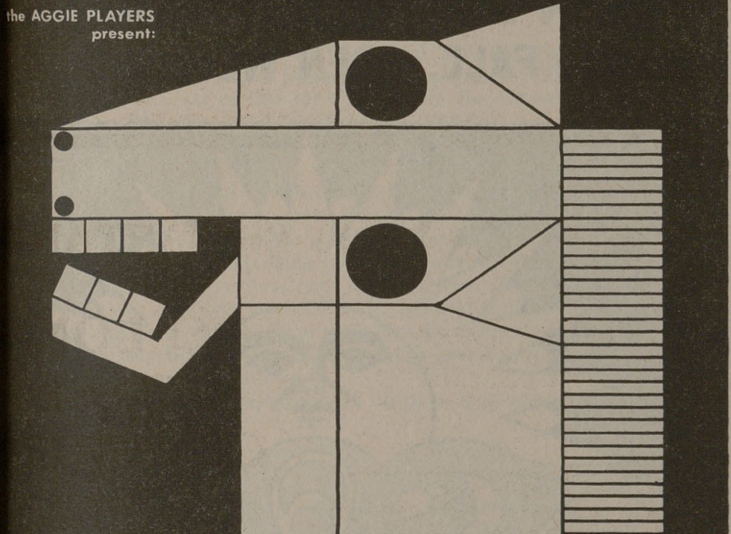


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