

Wolverhampton

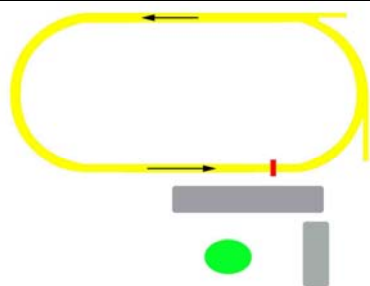
Location, Parking and Access



The course is situated about 5 miles from the M54 (J2) and ½ a mile from the A449. Approach routes are well signposted, although it does help if you know you are heading for Dunstall Park, its official name. Parking is on a tarmac surface and it is arguably one of the best racecourse car parks in the country.

Wolverhampton station is 1 mile from the track and a bus service runs from the station to the course. Wolverhampton station has frequent train services to major towns and cities.

Course Layout



Wolverhampton is a left handed (anti-clockwise) all weather (polytrack) circuit of 1 mile. This was the first floodlit course in the country allowing evening racing during the winter.

The course suits sharp short striding types.

Draw Advantage: there is no discernable draw

bias

Admission

There are two enclosures, Premier (£15 - £20) and Grandstand (£10 - £12). Higher prices £25 / £15 apply on Boxing Day. Special offers, including free admission, are often available in the winter, check with the racecourse.

Registered carers for disabled guests and accompanied under 16's are admitted free of charge.

Annual membership: Single £250, joint (same address) £375

Dress Code: The dress code for the Premier enclosure and all restaurants and executive boxes is smart casual. This means that no t-shirts, shorts, ripped denim, trainers or baseball hats are allowed, but smart, dark jeans are accepted.

Discounts: Seniors Disabled Group

Overview

Wolverhampton is all weather racing through and through, however it is also innovative and these innovations were evident on the day of the inspection. Wolverhampton was the first floodlit racecourse in the UK and it has made a feature of a Saturday night fun night. It is also the pioneer of twilight racing with racing starting late afternoon but being Wolverhampton it has to do things differently.

Their ten race card started at 4:10 with four races staged at 30 minute intervals until 5:40. There was then a one hour twenty minute break until the next race at 7:00 with the remaining races going through until 9:30.

This resulted in quite a surreal racing experience. The first four races were run with relatively small crowds, mostly families with young children. Indeed I did, on occasion wonder if I was at a racecourse or the local crèche. The atmosphere was low and there were only a handful of bookmakers. I was interested to see what happened during the break. What happened was a transformation, the size of the crowd increased many fold, and the atmosphere changed completely. Indeed another nine bookmakers also appeared out of the blue making it a much more competitive betting ring.

The biggest coming alive was in the main restaurants, all of which seemed full and appeared to have a convivial atmosphere.

In the Premier enclosure access is reasonable and the steps are not challenging. The enclosure is small but nowhere near the winning post, there is no seating and it is not under cover. Viewing is adequate but it is questionable if it is worth the extra money.



In the Grandstand enclosure, access is OK, although the steppings can be a little steep in places. Viewing is good and the entire track can be seen. The stand is very large taking into account the number of racegoers that attend the course, you will certainly not feel cramped whilst in the enclosure.

In stark contrast to a Saturday night meeting, a midweek winters afternoon meeting is somewhat depressing. The crowd(?) so small it would have been possible, if one was so inclined, to have been introduced to all ones fellow racegoers. With the few bookmakers present being located inside the atmosphere outside was somewhat flat and lacking. By mid-afternoon I counted 43 racegoers in the main stand.

The standard of racing at Wolverhampton is generally average, with a couple of notable exceptions in the spring.

Wolverhampton is no Royal Ascot, but then again it doesn't pretend to be. It has its own niche market and it's a market it provides for very well. Saturday nights are fun nights with a great atmosphere, other meetings are more low key. It doesn't help that the Grandstand is very large and is never likely to fill up which can add to the desolation at times, the plus side is you won't feel claustrophobic. Perhaps an indication of how bleak it can get at Wolverhampton is illustrated by one of the notices on the bookmakers notice board, It says during the four Winter months when the weather is inclement the betting ring may move inside at afternoon meetings.

If you are happy to watch the racing from behind glass or on a TV monitor then you could do an awful lot worse than spending a Saturday night at the Horizons Restaurant. On a winters night you can have the added bonus of looking out at your fellow racegoers freezing their wotsits off outside in the freezing cold.

Catering

Let's start with the basics, there are some mobile units providing reasonable food ... the chicken satay (£5.30) from the noodle bar was nice and spicy and filling, ideal for a chilly late afternoon. Jacket potatoes were available for £2.30 - £3.50. *(These facilities were not available at the midweek afternoon meeting)*




The fare in the grandstand enclosure is good basic food at a reasonable price, ideal for the many families who were at the meeting. Example prices Pie and Mash £4.50, Chilli or Curry £4.50, Hot Dog £2.50, burger £2 (£2.25 with cheese).

The Ringside restaurant is located adjacent to the parade ring. Open only on Saturday evenings the price is £29.50 (£42 in December and £48.50 Boxing Day)

However the greatest feature is the Horizons Restaurant a 400 seat tiered restaurant being massive plate glass windows offering great views of the racecourse. Also there are monitors on every table and a Tote runner will collect your bets from your table. Cost, including admission, £39.50 midweek, £44.50 Saturday evenings (£56.50 Friday and Saturday evenings in December, Boxing Day £63.50) .

Bitter and lager £3.30 a pint.

Ancillaries
<p>Bookmakers</p> <p>The numbers of bookmakers standing does vary and can be as low as half a dozen, rising to somewhere in the 20's at the busier meetings. During the winter, when the weather is bad, the bookmakers set up inside the grandstand building, rather than out in the open. At the midweek meeting there were only 5 bookmakers standing and one of those was betting away.</p>
<p>Racecard</p> <p>Costing £2 the racecard is adequate and in colour. On the day of the inspection it also included a voucher for half price admission at a future meeting.</p>
<p>Toilets</p> <p>The toilets were plentiful and clean, not a great deal more to be said really.</p>
<p>Parade Ring</p> <p>The parade ring looks sadly forlorn, set behind the stand it is almost desolate and it's appearance not helped by the bright green Astroturf.</p> <p>Viewing is reasonable and you can get close to the horses. However it does nothing to add to the sense of anticipation.</p>

Contact Details	
	www.wolverhampton-racecourse.co.uk
	0870 220 2442
	Wolverhampton Racecourse, Dunstall Park, Wolverhampton, WV6 0PE

Ownership	Arena
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Fixtures 2010
<i>Fixtures with an (A) are afternoon meetings all others are evening meetings</i>
<p>March 1st (A), 3rd (A), 4th, 5th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th (A), 18th, 19th, 22nd (A), 26th & 29th (A)</p> <p>April 8th, 9th, 10th, 20th (A), 23rd (A), 24th & 26th (A)</p> <p>May 10th (A), 17th (A) & 27th (A)</p> <p>June 4th (A), 21st (A) & 28th (A)</p> <p>July 6th (A), 12th & 26th (A)</p> <p>August 9th (A), 16th (A) & 20th</p> <p>September 2nd, 4th, 10th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 23rd, 24th & 25th</p>

October 1st , 2nd , 7th , 8th , 9th , 15th , 16th , 22nd , 28th , 29th & 30th
 November 1st (A), 5th , 8th (A), 11th , 12th , 13th , 15th (A), 18th , 19th , 20th , 25th ,
 26th 27th & 29th (A)
 December 2nd , 3rd , 4th , 10th , 11th , 13th (A), 17th , 20th (A), 26th (A) & 29th (A)

Inspection Dates		
<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
18/11/06	Broken cloud but chilly	10 AW (Twilight / Evening)
28/01/08	Overcast	7 AW midweek
30/12/08	Clear but bitterly cold	7 AW evening
14/01/10	Misty and cold	7 AW twilight