

# AMA NATS

2019 NATIONAL AEROMODELING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Muncie IN · Blytheville AR · Springerville AZ

## CONTROL LINE PRECISION AEROBATICS (STUNT)

July 16



The line for appearance point judging.

**By Matt Neumann (mrstuka@cinergymetro.net)**

Monday was the official start of Control Line Precision Aerobatics. It was officially about appearance point judging, and to have the pilots' meeting. Unofficially, it was to meet and greet old acquaintances and to make new friends. To many, the latter is more important than the primary reason.

In my case, I got to finally see an old friend of mine whom I have not seen in eight or so years. I also got to see some other friends who I only get to see once or twice a year. So, this time had a special meaning to many of us because we consider our airplane friends an extended family.

This year we had an upswing from last year in attendance. We will fly two skill classes later in the week. The Advanced class has 30 contestants, while the Open class has 41. So that is 71 contestants overall. Not a bad turnout.

Appearance point judging is when a set of judges sets a point value of 0 to 20 to an airplane. This point value is then added to each pilot's flight score. These points can be quite valuable later on when scores get added together. It is not uncommon for scores to be only a point or two difference. This can make or break a pilot's final position.

After the appearance score is determined, the planes are then arranged in rows determined by their score. The highest-scoring planes are put in the front row.

This year, we had seven planes in the front row—each getting 19 points. The next row was 18 points, with the following row 17 points, and so forth. It is a high honor to have your airplane put in the front row. So out of the 71 contestants this year, only seven can say they are front-row planes.

Because the pilots get kicked out of the gymnasium during the appearance point judging so that they don't disturb the judges, it is an opportune time to have the pilots' meeting. This is when the event director has a meeting with all of the pilots to discuss changes, and if anyone has any questions, they can ask them at that time. It is also used as a roll call to make sure everyone is here who signed up and to make sure no one was missed.

By the end of the meeting, everyone knew what position they would fly on and what circle they will fly later on in the week. This is very helpful.

My hat's off to Mark Weiss, this year's event director, in making the

meeting fun with his corny jokes and delivery in general. He is quick, funny, and very entertaining. Way to go Mark.

After the meeting, everyone was released from the meeting and allowed back into the gymnasium to see what their appearance points were. The pilots then got to choose a Concourse winner. That is a pilot's choice as to what is the best-looking plane. Each pilot got one vote.

This year's winner is Jim Aron. He has a wonderful orange and black airplane that has some very intricate designs. In terms of the airplane's artwork, it is something you almost have to see to believe. I have included a picture of him, his aircraft, and the trophy. This will give you an idea as to the intricacies of his paint design.

Also noteworthy is 13-year-old Luca Alimov. He is flying a Profile plane that has a wonderful finish on it. It is a wonder to behold. He has less than a dozen flights on it as of this writing. David Fitzgerald, a multiple-time Nats winner, is taking great interest in this kid and wants

to help him trim his airplane. This is what sportsmanship is all about: Helping the next generation. By doing this, we can ensure that the event will continue in the future.

A final note is Paul Walker's plane. Two weeks ago, he had a self-proclaimed senior moment and crashed his airplane. Really bad. As in lots of pieces bad. He managed to not only get it back together but get 18 points in the process. This is not a small feat. A phrase from the movie *Galaxy Quest* comes to mind. "Never give up! Never surrender!" This certainly applies to Paul in being able to get his severely damaged plane back together, and not only that, but together in such a way that you can't tell it was damaged.

Tuesday we will have two unofficial events. One is Old-Time Stunt while the other is Classic Stunt. This is when the competitors build replicas of planes built before 1970 and 1952 and compete with them. But more on this Wednesday.



Mark Weis gave a very entertaining presentation at the pilots' meeting.



The group of pilots in the meeting—a very attentive bunch.



A group of wives have called themselves the Motor Mouth Gang. This year they all wore purple shirts.



Jim Aron posing with his Concourse winning airplane and trophy.



The group of seven front row airplanes.



The group of second row airplanes.



A close up of Jim Aron's Concourse winning plane.



Matt Neumann's three-year-old Enterprise is holding up well.



Chris Cox's 2019 edition of his Hellcat.



Chris Rud's new Tempest.



Dan Banjock's Raven modeled after a full-scale aerobatic plane.



David Fitzgerald's multi-time national champion Thunder Gazer is back.



Hard to believe that Paul Walker's plane was in a LOT of pieces only 2 weeks ago.



Luca Alimov's airplane. Don't let the profile model fool you. It has a wonderful finish on it.



Todd Lee's wonderful Mustang deserves its front row placing.

# CONTROL LINE PRECISION AEROBATICS (STUNT)

July 17



Mike Schmidt putting his Stiletto through its paces in some horrendous winds.

**By Matt Neumann (mrstuka@cinergymetro.net)**

Tuesday did not have any official events happening, but that does not mean that there was not any activity at the L pad.

There were three unofficial events on Tuesday. Our Classic event is for planes that were designed before January 1, 1970. Another was Old-Time Stunt, which is for aircraft built before January 1, 1953. And a new event that was added just a few years ago is Nostalgia 30. These are planes that were designed 30 years or more ago. This event has what is called a rolling cutoff. That is, as time goes by, more and more planes will become eligible because the cutoff date changes. Both Classic and Nostalgia 30 fly the current AMA pattern, while the Old-Time Stunt flies the pattern of that era.

The contestants were greeted with light wind and a cloudy sky. We actually had a small rain shower go through just after 7 a.m. Nothing much—just enough to make people scramble for cover because it looked like it could become much worse. A couple of us got caught in the rain shower while we were flying. I was one of them. Fortunately, I was at the very end of my flight, so I did not have to wait much before being able to land and then get my plane in shelter (the car).

As it turned out, the rain was very short lived. By the time I got my plane in the car and the rest of my equipment in the pavilion, the rain quit. It figures.

After my practice flights, which I was able to get in short order on the paved L pad, I headed down to the grass circles where the action was taking place. We had 19 fliers in Classic with three Nostalgia 30 fliers and seven Old-Time Stunt fliers. Each pilot flew one flight in front of

two sets of judges. Each flight was added together to get a total score.

As the day progressed, it was not the rain that we had to worry about, it was the wind. The wind kept picking up as the morning went on. Toward the end, it started blowing pretty well—probably close to 20 mph. Poor Mike Schmidt flew in some of the worst of it. I am glad to say, however, that he did quite a good job of getting through the wind. It was not a fun flight for him at all. He got a well-deserved round of applause when he landed safely.

I am also happy to report that I am not aware of any crashes, so everyone got to take his or her planes back home to fly another day. Some pilots decided to not fly their second flight knowing they were not in the hunt to win, so why risk the airplane? Most likely, this was a very wise move on their part.

One of the more notable planes was Dan Banjock's Old-Time Stunt plane called the Galloping Comedian. It had an aluminum cowl handmade by him. I believe he said it was made by spinning a disc of aluminum and forming it like you would a clay pot. If I remember right, he also made the wheel pants for his wheels out of aluminum. He made them by forming each side over a mold and then having a buddy who is an expert welder weld the thin aluminum halves together. He then filed off the excess and finished them off. Leave it up to Danny to do something different. You rarely hear him say "can't." If there is a way, he will be able to find it.

He even has a Dyna Jet (ramjet engine) Stunter that actually does stunts. It burns something like 20 ounces of gasoline in 4 something minutes. It also flies very fast and very loud and is only flown for

demonstration flights. He enjoys doing things outside of the box and this certainly counts as outside of the box.

Doug Patterson again did a great job of running these events. He and his crew have this down, now so there are not many hiccups. Without the hard work of him and his crew, we would not be able to have these events. So, I would like to give a big round of applause to them. All were pretty much camera shy because they were so modest when it comes to thanking them. To them, this is just something they enjoy doing for the hobby and thanks is not really that necessary, but in reality it is. Because without them, we would not have these events.

One thing that we were treated to was a flyby by an A-10 Warthog and an AT-6. The A-10 just did a pass by, while the AT-6 flew pretty high up but had a heavy crosswind. With the strong crosswind, it made it look like it was flying sideways. It's something you don't see every day.

Wednesday starts the first day of qualifying for the two official events: Advanced and Open. These are the two skill classes that will be flying

for the next few days. The next two days, everyone can fly two flights per day, with the best one from each day counting toward your score to see who gets to move on to Friday's cut. We have 41 entries in Open and 30 in Advanced—a pretty good turnout for sure. It is going to be some long days for the judges.

So, Wednesday the rubber really starts to hit the road. Better start getting your act together if you have not already. If not, it could be too late.

Tuesday night practice was cut a little short. We had some rain late in the day and the wind was still up. Hopefully, Mother Nature will cooperate a bit more for us Wednesday. If not, it might not be so much battling between ourselves as it could be between Mother Nature and us. I don't know about you, but I would rather battle it out between us. Things are a lot more fun that way.

I can't wait to see what a new day will bring. Stay tuned. Things are going to heat up just like the weather.



Dan Banjock's Galloping Comedian. It has a hand made aluminum cowl and wheel pants.



Dan Banjock's Dyna Jet Powered Stunter. If you see it fly you might want to have some earplugs. It is LOUD!



Andy Stokey and Steve Smith are another set of judges.



Another Cavalier. This one belongs to John Simpson.



An Ares belonging to Wesley Dick. Wes is I believe over 80 and is still flying.



An Oriental with a very nice paint scheme.



A simple yet tastefully done paint scheme on the red Thunderbird.



A very nice Jameson Special Old Time Stunt plane.



A fitting paint scheme for a plane called the Patriot.



Mike Schmidt's Stiletto. The engine muffler combination gives it a really nice bark while it is running.



Judges on one of the circles is David Fitzgerald and Dave Tribble.



Many of the wives come along and help out by doing a lot of the paperwork. This really becomes a family affair.



Doug Patterson is the guy running the show for today. He did a wonderful job.



Joe Gilbert's nice looking Cavalier.



John Paris putting his plane through its paces.

# CONTROL LINE PRECISION AEROBATICS (STUNT)

July 18



The Nats can be a real family affair. Here we have the Alimov family. Father Michael and sons Luca and Gabriel.

**By Matt Neumann (mrstuka@cinergymetro.net)**

Wednesday morning greeted the contestants with clouds and light wind. It had rained fairly hard at 4 to 5 in the morning, so the area was wet, but at least the sky was not falling at the time that the contestants got to the field.

The L pad that we fly off of is a hard asphalt surface surrounded by grass. Through about midmorning, the grass was very wet and had some puddles. Walking through it meant wet shoes and socks. I hate wet socks, along with a lot of other people, so walking on the asphalt was certainly preferable to wet socks. Flying is not allowed until 7 a.m., while actual official flights do not start until 8. So, if you want to get a practice flight in, you have to get to the field early.

Wednesday marked the first day of official flights for CLPA (Control Line Precision Aerobatics). The Open and Advanced groups were split into four separate groups. Each group then flew two flights in front of two sets of judges—one set of judges Wednesday and a different set of judges Thursday. The best flight from each day will then be added together to see who makes the cut to fly on Friday.

The top five from each group in the Open skill class and the top four from the Advanced class will move on to Friday's flying. These two days,

you at least have a flight that you can mess up and recover from. Friday is a different story. More on that day later.

Wednesday started out with complete cloud cover. We could tell that there were rain showers in the area, but we were fortunate that those did not come over us. As the day went on, the clouds broke up but fortunately, the wind did not pick up. From what I can tell, most people were at least pleased with the conditions. Yes, it could have been a little cooler or stayed cloudy all day long to make it easier to fly, but it sure beats some of the weather we had the previous couple of days. So, I am one who won't complain ... much.

Some of the notable things that happened was we had a flyby not once, but twice, by FIFI. This is the Confederate Air Force's B-29. It has been at the local airport for a couple of days and this is the first time we actually got to see her fly. She did a low enough pass each time that we could certainly tell it was FIFI and get a good look at her as she passed overhead. I felt sorry for the pilots who were flying and the judges. They had to pay attention to their flights and could not watch as she flew overhead. I am sure someone will have some videos of it and post them somewhere on social media so they can catch up on what happened.

Other than a few nervous jitters and a small problem with a plug not

connecting right in an electric plane, nobody really had any issues that I am aware of. I know one flier who is at his first Nats accidentally did too many inside loops. This caused him to lose 25 pattern points for not doing the pattern the correct way. We can chalk that up to nerves.

Another incident happened when Paul Walker went up for his first official flight. Just as he made the first hard turn into the first maneuver, his motor sputtered and then quit. This is highly unusual for an electric-powered model. Fortunately, he had enough momentum to carry him until he could get the plane level and land safely. The way things went down, the rules stated that he did not officially start the pattern yet, so he got to do an attempt instead of the flight counting as an official. You get three attempts to fly two official flights. So, he used up his “free” attempt. He quickly diagnosed the problem as a loose connection and fixed it and was then able to make another attempt in short order, and this time he completed the pattern.

Scoring was the only real hiccup of the day—as in the slowness of scores being posted. In this case, it probably is a good problem to have.

In the past few years, we have gotten barely enough judges to judge all four circles. This year we have 14, which is almost double what we had the past couple of years. This is a good problem to have. Unfortunately, this means that the fliers will have to wait to see what their scores are. This will determine who is on the bubble for Thursday, who is sitting pretty, and who does not have much of a chance.

So, after Wednesday, the rubber really starts to hit the road. For those who are well in, it is an easy day. Just put in a normal flight and relax until Friday. For those who don't have a chance, they are there to fly and have fun talking with the rest of the pilots.

Now for the ones on the bubble, it can be very nerve-wracking. Because you are nervous before you fly and then once you do fly, all you can do is wait. And wait.

No pressure.

Thursday's flights are always some of the more interesting to watch. I can't wait to see what the day will bring.



Circle 1 judges Mike Eber, Doug Patterson, and Steve Smith.



Circle 2 judges Dale Barry, brothers Jim and Wayne Smith, and John Simpson.



Circle 3 judges Mark Hughes, Mark Overmeir, and Joe Otto.



Circle 4 judges Joan Cox, Joe Daly Jr., Jim Vigani, and Wes Eakin.



Todd Lee getting ready for an official. He is pull testing his airplane. This is to ensure that it is safe to fly after everything is hooked up. Pilots hate this test by the way.



We have some youngsters with us competing. Steven Daly is flying while his father Joe coaches.



Another youngster is Luca Alimov and he is putting his plane through its paces.



Some of what it looked like when we got to the field today. Sorry for the bad pictures. My camera does not like low light.



Planes and pilots awaiting their turn for an official flight.



Paul Walker heading out for an official flight. Chris Cox holding ready to launch when told.



Early morning line up. Need to get here early or you won't have time for a practice flight.



Howard Rush signals to start an official flight while Chris Cox does the launching.



A plane that really does not need any introduction. The B-29 Fifi in one of her flybys.

# CONTROL LINE PRECISION AEROBATICS (STUNT)

July 19



Early morning line up for a practice flight before official flights begin.

**By Matt Neumann (mrstuka@cinergymetro.net)**

Blue skies, nothing but blue skies ... well at least for the morning. The contestants were greeted Thursday morning with a blue sky and very light wind. It was a welcome change from what we have been getting; however, things would change as the day went on.

Thursday was the second day of qualifying. The best score of two flights from Wednesday would be added to the best score from the two flights flown Thursday to see who made the cut for Friday's competition. For those sitting pretty on or near the top, it is a fairly routine day. Many will just put in one good flight and pass on the second, knowing they are well in and that nobody can catch them.

Now for the fliers on or near the bubble, that is a different story altogether. This is where the real knock-down-drag-out fights, so to speak, happen. For these fliers, their goal is to get a good score to jump over someone else or to lock in their position so they can compete Friday. If they don't, they get to go watch from the bleachers. Actually, it is more like talk with the rest of the pilots, while not having to worry about their next flight.

Fliers were welcomed with very light wind in the morning. It stayed at almost perfect conditions throughout most of the first round. However, near the very end of the first round and into the second, the wind started to pick up along with the clouds. The wind never really got real bad.

I opted to fly my second flight, even though I was well in for the next day. I wanted a little bit of practice in some wind and there is no

better way to get that than in an official type of flight.

However, shortly after my second flight, we were noticing that the clouds were getting darker in the west. Then we noticed what looked like some rain forming in a small spot. However, that small spot grew and grew and grew. It got so big that Mark Weiss got a message from AMA Headquarters warning about the impending rain. Mark then shut down the flying and told everyone "to head for the hills." This was the signal for everyone to get their gear under cover in a hurry. Most were able to do so.

I helped Dave Tribble, who was about to go up and get his plane to his car before it really hit. I saw it coming and got my stuff safely in the car beforehand, just in case. On a side note, it is a bit amusing to watch pilots carry their planes as fast as they can without actually running. Some probably set walking speed records trying to get their planes in their cars. You don't and can't really run with a plane safely. But you can walk very fast pretty safely.

The rain lasted only about 15 minutes. Most pilots were either in the pavilion or their cars. It was safe to come out and not get wet after that. However, due to lightning in the area, it was not deemed safe by the AMA to fly for a little over an hour after that.

Once it was declared safe by the AMA, the remaining flights were flown. When flying resumed, the wind had died down considerably, almost to nothing. There was just a hint of breeze when the last of the pilots flew.

One strange thing that happened Thursday was that Paul Walker's

lines snagged together when he was in the inside square maneuver. He gave some up control to turn the plane 90° in one of the corners. However, when he neutralized the controls so the plane would go straight, it did not go straight but kept on turning. It turned in very small loops until, thankfully, the clips on the end of the lines freed themselves. This gave Paul enough time to recover, saving the plane from another crash.

Remember I mentioned that he crashed it about two weeks before the Nats and was able to put it all back together again just before the Nats? Well, thankfully, this time he was able to recover his plane before disaster struck. He mentioned that his airplane was on its fourth life because he almost had a disastrous mishap with it Wednesday due to an electrical issue. Thursday was a mechanical issue. He was able to fix the problem and put up a really nice flight after the rain delay.

Fortunately for Paul, he has gotten his problems fixed, and on days that he has a throw-away flight. He pretty much needed them Wednesday and Thursday. Hopefully, everything will work out for him Friday because it is going to be roughest day of the competition. On that day, we get two flights and that is it. They are both added together to see who the top five are in Open class, which means they move on to fly in the finals on Saturday and to see who is the overall winner in the Advanced class.

Some other weird issues that some of the fliers have been encountering is small bugs. They are getting into the fuel system of

their planes and clogging up the works.

Bill Rich is back this year after a five-year hiatus. In his first official flight, he pulled out level during a maneuver and his engine suddenly quit. After further inspection after he landed, he checked the filter that he had onboard his plane only to discover that it was clogged with small white bugs. It appears they are getting in through the vent tube to the fuel tank sometimes while flying. Talk about a bug in the system. I know of another flier who has had similar issues. Extra filters onboard an aircraft is in order.

Now you may get tired of me talking about Dan Banjock, but just when you think you have seen it all from him, he comes up again with something different. This time he showed up with a compressed air-powered motor in a replica of a 1929 Free Flight model. The engine was also from 1929 and it looked weird. There was no crankcase. You could see the connecting rods to each of the three cylinders. The compressed air bottle was a pop bottle that he pumped up with an old-fashioned bicycle tire pump. He says it runs about a minute when he puts in 100 psi.

He gave a little demonstration on the ground and it looks weird seeing it run. How he finds these things I don't know, but they are entertaining for sure.

Well, it is time for me to get some rest. Friday is going to be a stressful day with two flights and they both count. No goofs. Am I looking forward to it? You bet. This is going to be fun!



Dave Tribble puts his plane through its paces. Don't worry. The plane may look like it is going to crash but it is turning in a loop and will bottom out about 5 feet above the ground as planned.



David Fitzgerald signaling for an official flight. With Jim Aron launching.



Dan Banjock showing off his compressed air driven motor. It is a sight to see in action.



Dan pumping up the air pressure with a bicycle pump for a demonstration of his compressed air motor.



Dave Tribble getting ready to prep his plane for an official flight.



Chris Rud smiles for the camera after successfully performing a pull test.



The planes awaiting their turn for flight.



We have a couple of international competitors as well: Musaru Hiki and Masahiro Matsui.



Saramarie Huff launches for her husband, Richard.



Steve Millet puts his plane through its paces. Looks like it really pulls.



Kenny Stevens is flying well despite a bad back. I am third in my group while he is second.



National and World Champion Orestes Hernandez qualifying for Friday's competition.



It was a hot one today. Order of business for the pilots waiting their turn was to sit in the shade.



James Mills launches for his son Ben.

# CONTROL LINE PRECISION AEROBATICS (STUNT)

July 20



William Demaru gets the customary bath for winning the Advanced Class. Good job William and good job guys for getting him soaked!

**By Matt Neumann (mrstuka@cinergymetro.net)**

Gray skies, nothing but gray skies ... at least for most of the morning.

Friday is traditionally called top 20 day. It is the day that the top 20 from the Open skill class flyoff to find the top five who will move on to Saturday's event. It is also the day that, in this case, the top 16 from the Advanced class flyoff to find out who will be crowned the Advanced Class National Champion.

Contestants was greeted Friday morning with gray skies and moderate wind. We would get a peek at the sun now and again throughout the morning, but it would get covered up again. The wind was moderate at probably close to 10 mph all morning.

After flying was done, the wind started to pick up more and more. The moderate wind that we had was flyable but made things rather interesting for the fliers. They certainly had to be on their toes when doing their "tricks." Placement of a maneuver was crucial in order to fly it well.

Friday is the most nerve-wracking day of them all. Contestants fly two flights, one flight each in front of two different sets of judges. Then both flights are added together to determine the high score. There are no goofs allowed. No second chances. The best five added scores go on to fly in the coveted top 5 day on Saturday in the Open class, while the best score in Advanced wins.

The scoring Friday was quite close for the most part. We had few very high scores, but not many. Most were within a 20-point range—in the 530's and 540's. A perfect score, if I remember right, is 645. It was a real shootout for the most part. We really did not know who was going to be in the coveted top five until the last scores went up. With this scoring, just a couple of points can move you up or down quite a few places. As it turns out, the difference between fifth place and sixth place was a quarter of a point.

How do you get a quarter of a point? We had four judges on that circle. Each judge's score is added together and then the average is taken to find the contestant's score. So, divide something by 4 and you could get one quarter. Likewise, there were three judges on another circle. So, you could get a score of 1/3.

Anyway, the one contestant beat out another contestant because one judge on the one circle gave one more point to one flier over the other. Now that is scoring things close!

I am also happy to report that there were no incidents, mechanical or otherwise, with any of the contestants' aircraft that I am aware of. So, everyone's equipment worked the way it is supposed to, which is good because that means everyone got a fair shot at everything. Even the weather stayed consistent. That is, everyone had the same amount of wind. Yes, it did go up and down, but it did so for everyone.

In the end, David Fitzgerald, Paul Walker, Chris Rud, Orestes

Hernandez, and Derek Barry all got in to the top five for Saturday's flying. William Demaru won Advanced class. Congratulations to William for a job well done. He was on the verge of winning last year, but encountered motor difficulties in one of his flights, knocking him out of first place. This year everything worked for him, and he even did this on a fairly new plane with very few flights on it before heading to the Nats. This is extremely difficult to do because you do not "know" your airplane. It normally takes many flights with a specific plane to get to know its habits and to get it trimmed out. So, my hat is off to William for a difficult job well done.

Saturday's flying would consist of the previously mentioned five Open fliers flying three flights each with only the top two flights counting. Those two top flights will then be added together to find the

overall Open Nats Champion for 2019.

We will also have the Junior and Senior flyoffs Saturday as well. The Junior is a kid who is 13 years old or younger, while the Senior is a kid who is 14 to 18 years old. The kids are fun to watch because they are the future of our event. They also usually have to have parents along helping, which is a good thing. This is how some families spend quality time together. And working on and flying model airplanes is a good quality family time activity.

If Saturday is anything like Friday, the scores are going to be close. This means it will be a sight to watch because fractions of a point can make a big difference. It is going to be a real nail-biter Saturday and I can't wait to watch.



The pit area just as official flights are to begin.



The plane that has more lives than a cat. This is Paul Walkers plane awaiting its turn to demonstrate what it can do. Thankfully nothing went wrong today.



David Fitzgerald warming up the judges. All the judges watch him at once so they can compare notes later on before competition begins.



Todd Lee's, Bob McDonald's and Howard Rush's planes in the pits awaiting their turn.



Joe Daly during an official as the judges keep a close eye on him.



Mike McHenry during an official flight.



Mike McHenry pull tests (way down yonder) while Alan Goff and Ty Marcioni look on.



Mike McHenry signals the judge for an official while Alan Goff launches. The judges await the flight in the background.



Chris Rud works on his plane between rounds.



Richard Oliver signals the judges while Joe Gilbert launches.



Bob McDonald starts his engine for an official while Chris Rud launches.



Steve Fittin brings along a companion when he travels. His name is Uni. Uni goes everywhere with him.



Here is William in dryer times before his bath. He is holding the perpetual trophy given to the Advanced Class winner. Nice trophy huh!



The crowd gathers around the score board to see who will win as flying comes to an end.

# CONTROL LINE PRECISION AEROBATICS (STUNT)

July 22



Our top 5 contestants. Back left to right. Derek Barry 5th, Orestes Hernandez 2nd, Paul Walker 3rd, Chris Rud 4th, and kneeling David Fitzgerald 1st.

**By Matt Neumann (mrstuka@cinergymetro.net)**

Saturday the fliers woke up to hazy skies and light wind. It was a welcome change from the day before.

Official flights didn't start until 8 a.m., but contestants could put in a practice flight or two from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. if they wished. Derek Barry was one of those fliers. Unfortunately, we got a little more excitement in the morning than what we wanted. After Derek started his engine, he went around the propeller and reached under the engine to take off the battery that is used to heat the glow plug for starting. In doing so in a normally safe way, he still managed to get the top part of his forearm in the propeller. This was not a slice and dice moment. It took a chunk of skin off that was about the size of a quarter. I did not get a picture of that and if I did, I would not share it here. But I did see a picture and let me just say that if you saw it before lunch, you would lose your appetite. Not pretty.

He had put on a gauze bandage twice, but it was still getting blood soaked. Fortunately, one of the judges knows first aid and properly bandaged up the wound. We were joking about two phrases that come to mind, "that is going to leave a mark" and "you will feel that in the morning." All jokes aside, remember that safety is priority one. Always be aware of spinning propellers. In a battle between you and the propeller, the propeller always wins.

Saturday's flying consisted of each pilot flying three flights. The best

two were added together to get the final score.

Derek's bad luck continued during his first flight. The wind was light as he started and blowing in one direction. We could see in the distance a long band of very dark clouds, but considering that the wind was blowing into them, we thought they would blow away from us. We were wrong. As Derek's flight progressed, the line of clouds blew right over us and changed the wind direction 180°. That means the judges had to hightail it to the other side.

Now, you might wonder what difference it makes. Well, our planes are tethered. That means we have two thin stainless-steel cables attached to our planes at one end and the other is attached to a handle. When we move the handle, we pull on one line or the other, causing the plane to turn up or down. The plane has a pull-pull system to the plane and a push-pull inside of the plane. Because it is pull-pull outside, there has to be tension on those cables, or you lose control of the planes. Not good. So that is why placement in the wind is critical. We need the wind to blow the plane away from us to keep tension and control. If the lines go slack because the wind blew it into us, we lose control, and oops.

Not only did Derek have to move everything around, but the wind also picked up considerably. From a light breeze to why am I doing this? He made it through the pattern quite well, showing off his skill as a pilot and being able to fly in the mess.

As things would go, it calmed down after his flight. Yup, he had bad luck.

As you may recall, I told you about Paul Walker's electrical issue during Wednesday's qualifying and his mechanical issue during Thursday's flying. Fortunately, he did not have any issues on a day that does not have a throw away (Friday). However, Saturday you do, and he had another issue and that was a mental issue.

We are scored on 15 different maneuvers. Whoever does them consistently the best, wins. The thing is, we are supposed to do them in the same order all of the time. This way, you don't confuse the judges. Well, Paul lost track of things and went straight from the wingover to the inside square loops—skipping inside and outside round loops, as well as the inverted flight. We get 25 pattern points if we do everything in order, but since he didn't, he automatically lost those 25 points. And at this stage, you might as well pack up and go home. So, after catching himself, he decided to just fly out the flight level and come back with his next two flights, which had to count. My hat is off to Paul. He had some really bad luck this week, yet he kept his composure and soldered on to eventually come out third. Not getting rattled is no small feat.

This year we had four Junior contestants and two Senior contestants, which when compared to previous years, is a good turnout. The Junior contestants are kids under 14, while the Senior contestants are kids ages 14 through 18. Both still do the same thing as the Open contestants.

Sam Londke, a Junior, stole the show—not with his flying, but with his attitude. Sam broke both of his airplanes. After the first one, he gave his dad a high five for it being a “spectacular” crash. He is used to crashing and having to fix his planes, so they brought out the backup.

During this flight, he had his lines catch together, causing another crash. This time was really spectacular. It went straight onto asphalt under full power. It made a really loud smack on the pavement. He then gave his dad another high five and then looked at the wreckage. He proclaimed, “I even broke the engine! I never did that before!” Did the kid cry? No. He took everything in stride—a testament to the rest of us. Don't let things get you down.

Friday, I mentioned that Saturday would be a shootout. I was not disappointed. When the dust settled, David Fitzgerald won his 12th Nats. Orestes Hernandez was 2nd, Paul Walker 3rd, Chris Rud 4th, and Derek Barry was 5th. There was less than 2 points separating David and Orestes out of 1,150 total points. Eight points separated 2nd and 3rd, 4 points between 3rd and 4th, and less than 5 between 4th and 5th places. This is really close if you consider how many points overall are given. We did not know who was in what position until all of the scores were up. There was a lot of nail biting between David and Orestes. They probably don't have to worry about trimming their nails for a while.

As mentioned, this was David's 12th win. Only one other person has won the Nats this many times. That is Paul Walker. They are chief rivals, yet great friends. This is the way it should be.

As for me, I learned a lot and will take that knowledge back with me to improve my program and to begin to prepare for next year. That is also one of the advantages of coming to the Nats. You always learn something to try and help better yourself. No other place has this much knowledge so readily available. It is worth the trip just to soak in the knowledge, and competition is just icing on the cake. If you have a chance to come to the Nats next year, please do. You won't be disappointed.



There is almost a quarter century of Nats wins between these two. Both 12-time champions. David Fitzgerald (L) and Paul Walker (R).



Derek Barry starts his engine while Chris Rud launches for his first official. You can see the clouds that were about to move across during his flight that would give him a lot of grief.



Derek gets first aid from Joe Daly Jr to fix his Boo Boo. Read text for description. And remember, SAFETY FIRST!



David Fitzgerald accepts his first place trophy, number 12, from Derek Barry.



Three generations of Lee's. Jim (L) Father, Todd (R) son, and Alexander (C) grandson.



Steven Daly accepts his 1st place trophy from Derek Barry.



The two most responsible people for running this year's Nats: Mark Weis (L) and Derek Barry (R). Thanks guys! You did a great job.



Samantha Hines accepts her first place trophy in the Senior division.



Samantha Hines signals for an official flight while her father Steve launches.



Sam Londke accepts his trophy for 3rd in Junior despite crashing twice.



Sam Londke showing us what happens when a plane goes straight in under full power into asphalt. Notice the cylinder and piston in front of his knees.



James Mills holds for his son, Ben, who came in second in Senior.



Joe Daly looks on as Steven Daly signals for an official with Jose Modesto launching.



Our Junior Champion, Steven Daly.



Our Senior Champion, Samantha Hines.