

The Hammerhead

***In This Issue:
New President,
New Column***

***Flying the
Decathlon in
Intermediate***

***Kathy Jaffe
Results***

***Upcoming
Events***

And More...



From the Pilot's Seat

We held the elections at Mansfield on Saturday (the 13th). After a hard fought campaign an overwhelming majority (four out of four) was won by the Till/Becla ticket. Our platform was "more of the same"! The crowds cheered and we held a short inauguration followed by wild partying, (some of us

drank some Cokes).

I think we all owe Steve Pennypacker a substantial thank you. He has done a good job as President of keeping our contests going. He re-introduced the Outlaw, which everyone enjoys, and kept Springfield going when George had to give up being contest director. He also ran Orange for the longest time and succeeded in passing it off to (an unsuspecting) Rob Petit, who is proving to be an able director.

I am glad Janusz Becla decided to run for the Vice Presidency, he is well connected to the Nashua crowd and they are an increasing percentage of the chapter's membership. Congratulations on your election Janusz.

I like our Chapter and I enjoy being with the weird lot of people who make it up. That is the main reason I became President. I do not have any amazing ideas about bold new initiatives. I think we're currently doing what we want to be doing which is flying, competing, and supporting each other in these

endeavors. There are some ideas I want to act on, for instance- I would like to see the processes involved in running each contest, including the Outlaw, written up in a simple form so that it will be easier to pass the CD's job from one "generation" to the next. The main theme of my administration (with thanks to "Dubbya") is to "stay the course".

This coming year we are planning the following activities-

The Outlaw 3- November 20th (rain date-Nov. 21st)
That's next weekend folks!

Judges School and the banquet sometime in February 2005

The Orange Contest- May 2005

The Springfield Contest- Tentatively scheduled for August 25-28 2005

and The Outlaw 4- Tentatively scheduled for November 5 2005

Finally, I would like to say that this Chapter is one of the strongest in the country. The aerobatic community in New England is growing and we look forward to meeting new members as the year goes on.

I am always available and open to ideas. My e-mail
setill@comcast.net
My cell phone- 978-408-9583

Stephen Till
(your president)

Outlaw 3

Mean & lean at Keene! Time to dust off your peg leg & hook. This years' Outlaw is slated for Keene's Dillant-Hopkins Airport on Saturday November 20th (with Sunday the 21st as a rain date.) Like last year, our highly trained staff of judges will critique each flight. Bring your free or make one up, but keep it safe. Points will be given for costumes and we will handicap the aircraft to keep the competition fair. Pre World War One aircraft will definitely have an edge, as will pilots wearing glitter and high heels.

The waived box will open at 9:00 and remain open until 5:00 local time. We will have a Pilot's briefing at 11:00 and get flying by 12:00. In order to keep the Airport open (at the airport manager's request) we are

all flying above 1500' AGL. We will do tech inspections as per a regular contest so bring your logs. We would also like to check your sequence for safety before you fly, so bring a presentable drawing of what you plan to do.

See you there!

Flying the Decathlon, to win (in Intermediate),
Possible, but at what cost?

by
Dave Watson

The Super Decathlon is a wonderful training aircraft. I don't think you can spend too much time in this airplane. I have been competing in mine since 1998 and I was graced with several Sportsman wins, places and shows in 1999 and 2000. I spent the last three seasons competing in Intermediate bouncing back and forth between it and a Yak 55. Over the last three years, I have modified my flying style to fly the SD like I have recently been taught to fly the YAK (crisper and harder). I have won and placed second in Intermediate in the Super Decathlon (SD). Prior to the events that transpired over the end of 2003, I loved to fly the SD, particularly in Intermediate. Now, I wouldn't recommend it to anyone. The plane simply cannot take it.

Before I discuss my SD experience, a review the POH is order. The SD POH tells us that it is rated for +6g and -5g if loaded within the aerobatic limits. It is relatively easy to configure the plane within this envelope if you are a single pilot and it is absolutely possible to fly well, and win in Primary and Sportsman, flying the plane without approaching these limits. Somewhere in my flight training, I read that the structural limits on a plane are established to give the maximum loads that can be imposed upon it prior to yielding the materials of construction. In other words, if you fly it within those limits, you will not "hurt" it, no matter how many times you impose these loads. In regards to the SD, a US certified aerobatic aircraft, I thought I was totally safe pulling to 6 g's and pushing to minus 3.5. Which I admittedly did (but never over) every time I flew the plane in competition and most practice sessions over the past three years. However, as I determined at great expense, these forces probably led to substantial damage to my wings.

One of the wonderful characteristics of the SD is its grace. It does exactly what you tell it to do and it shows it. With that Hershey Bar plan-form wing of 32 feet, everyone can see exactly what you are doing.

This can be a tremendous disadvantage on those days when you are just a little off. However, if you get in the groove and fly it well, the judges will reward you. I think somewhere along the line, I got obsessed with flying the SD to win in Intermediate. I saw this as much more of challenge than moving up to Advanced in the YAK. I developed a SD flying style that incorporated the faster reflex coordination necessary for the YAK. I flew it with 5.5 to 6 g pulls and 3g pushes as crisp as possible with an abrupt return to neutral to set the lines, point rolls always flown to full extension and as crisp as possible. However, I found that Snaps are not performed in the SD as they are in most other airplanes. I spent my first season in Intermediate at the bottom of the pack. My snaps were exactly 50/50. Half the time they were scored, half the time they were zeros. I found that you need to give a long second (or two) between the pull and the kick to let the wing stall (warning horn squealing) or the SD will spiral roll, not snap. The spiral roll is easily seen, and it is not rewarded by the judges or appreciated by the aircraft.

Where I am going with this? I thought a brief explanation of how I flew my 1995 SD would give you some measure of comparison to how you may (or may not) be flying yours. The first year I owned my SD, prior to competition aerobatics, I had a wing root fairing failure at the first rib. I called the factory and they assured me that this is not uncommon in 1991 to 1996 aluminum spar Decathlons and that my mechanic should simply replace the bad rivets and add additional ones between each failed one. Many dollars later, I had the wing repaired and (per factory approval) doubled the rivets on the opposite side too (for preventative maintenance). In 2002, the right fairing failed aft of the original repair (where we had not doubled the rivets). Fortunately, Danny Adams was on field (thanks to the fabulous flight safety program sponsored by Aviat) and he patched me up for a nice easy return flight home. Many dollars later, it was repaired again. One year to the contest later, this past September, I noticed the left fairing had separated. This failure occurred either during the cross country to the competition or during a 4 1/2g Sportsman practice flight taken by a friend of mine. I fueled the plane prior to the cross-country and I absolutely know the wing fairing was solid at that time. Once again, Danny was there for the rescue. This time, the news was worse. Because I had doubled the rivets, when the fairing went, it took chunks of rib with it. The damage was not so bad that I couldn't get it home, but bad enough the rib had to be replaced. After the ferry flight home my mechanic and I decided to replace the first ribs on

both wings with the new thicker 1997 versions. After receiving them, the box knives came out and we slashed back the fabric to expose the failed ribs, *and the other hidden surprises.*

With the fabric removed to expose the first rib we could see deeper into the wing than the inspection holes permit. We initially saw evidence of additional structural failures. So rib-by-rib (and tear-by-tear) the fabric of my beautiful wings was peeled back exposing even more troublesome failures. We found numerous failed rivets in critical areas, cracks in every fuel tank support bracket, and one previously undetected leaky fuel tank. So much for my assumption that this plane could be flown within its limits without failure. The wing root failure was a blessing in disguise. Without that obvious failure, we would not have detected the seven adjacent failed rivets holding the right 3rd rib to the leading edge or the leaking left fuel tank. I suspect, a catastrophic failure could have ensued flying the plane as I do (to, but not exceeding its limits). My mechanic and I decided to send the wings to factory for repair. *A decision I greatly regret.* This is another horrible story worth repeating to anyone who dares hear it.

I finally got to fly my SD in January 2004, after four months of downtime and intense aggravations with the factory. Although the wings are refurbished, I certainly intend to modify my flying techniques. Since I know that I did not abuse this aircraft and in light of the failures I had, I have no confidence in the placarded structural limits. Under my ownership, this plane will not fly Intermediate again and I will never snap it again. One of the causes of the tank failure that was cited to me by the factory is Snaps. I re-checked the POH and found that snaps are approved for aerobatic category loading with no additional cautions. If snaps are approved maneuvers, why would the factory suspect they caused these failures? I know of three other Super D's that have had to have their fuel tanks replaced. I really think that my findings are not unusual.

Most SD pilots in Chapter 35 rent their time. I know two local flight schools that also prohibit snaps in their SD. Those flight school Decathlons get far more use than mine did and therefore may be even more likely to fail if flown too hard. I do hope that if you are one of the many SD pilots that rent, that you heed the lessons that I have learned (and respect the wishes of the aircraft owners) and limit your use of these wonderful planes to Primary and Sportsman maneuvers at all times (as I now do). Many pilots have done very well in Sportsman in the SD. I know it can be flown to win in Sportsman without pulling

the snot out of it. I never exceeded 5g's in Sportsman competition, there simply isn't any need to. It scrubs all your airspeed robbing you of valuable energy for the next maneuver. Please limit your use of these planes to the normal category limitations (+5g, -3g) and DON'T SNAP them. If the factory warns against it, common sense and perhaps the POH should too.

The management at the factory opted not to re-paint my wings by color matching the existing color (afterwards, I was told the paint was too expensive to keep within the fixed price that had I been quoted). Therefore, I was charged an additional \$660 to paint the outboard portions of the wings to match the new brighter red they had used to paint the repaired area. As a result, I have these nice bright red wings that contrast with the original slightly red-orange tint of the fuselage. Ironically, this subtle yet totally unnecessary debacle by the factory will act as a constant reminder to me of the expense (and possible dangers) of flying the Super Decathlon in Intermediate and to the nightmares in dealing with the factory.

Nationals 2004

The U.S. Nationals wrapped up at the end of September. Kirby Chamblis, Debby Rihn Harvey, and David Martin finished 1st, 2nd and 3rd in unlimited. Chapter 35 had two representatives at the event. Janusz Becla flew in Intermediate and finished 10th. Rob Holland took 3rd in Advanced. Congratulations!

Kathy Jaffe Challenge

After a fantastic weekend of flying in the Catskills, the 2004 Kathy Jaffe Challenge is complete. Attendance was somewhat lower than in previous years, due to the fact that the contest had been rained out and rescheduled. But the good news was that everybody had a chance to fly three flights, and we still finished up on Saturday!

Big "thank-yous" go to the many volunteers who helped make the contest happen, starting with CD Ron Chadwick and Assistant CD Steve Seidel. Chief Judge Greg Dungan kept everybody on the same page and moving, and also favored the banquet attendees on Saturday with a wrap-up of his experiences at the AWAC in Sweden. Ann Salcedo

set the standard for volunteer multi-tasking, doing her usual superb job as VC while splitting the registrar job with Ann Liu. Somehow, Miriam Levin was able to accomplish the computer scoring tasks, and also serve on the judges' line. Speaking of judges, the line was staffed by a small but dedicated group including Steve Seidel, Miriam Levin, Guenther Eichhorn, Mark Stewart, and Bill Gordon. Thanks!

In addition to the awards for the various flight categories, a number of special awards were given out. The Aviat Trophy, for the highest-scoring Pitts or Eagle pilot, went to the ever-modest Ray Franke (Ray now has two of those on his shelf, after flying a total of *two* contests). The Best First-Time Sportsman award was given to the man who finished third outright in Sportsman, and flew one of the best individual flights of the whole contest (with an 86.46% in his last flight), Paul Uhlig. The Grass Roots award went to the pilot who also won in Primary, Farrell Woods. And finally, the Wrong-way Corrigan award was bestowed upon the pilot who most clearly exemplified the spirit of dogged and backward determination, proudly streaking toward the wrong end of the box at *almost* every turn: Derek "at least I'm bringing home a plaque" Dodds.

A summary of the results is shown below (detailed results are available at [the IAC 52 Web site](#)):

Primary

- 1st Farrell Woods
- 2nd Wes Jones
- 3rd Alan Troutman

Sportsman

- 1st Ray Franke
- 2nd Weston Liu
- 3rd Paul Uhlig
- 4th Tom Parsons
- 5th Chris Getz
- 6th David L. Brandon
- 7th Dan Freeman

Intermediate

- 1st Bill Gordon
- 2nd Mark Stewart
- 3rd Kendal Simpson
- 4th Janusz P. Becla
- 5th Bill Green
- 6th Scott Francis

Advanced

- 1st Rob Holland
- 2nd Alex Belov
- 3rd Guenther Eichhorn
- 4th Andy Cooper
- 5th Derek Dodds

NEW ENGLAND AEROBATIC CLUB - IAC CHAPTER 35
REGISTRATION FORM

Instructions:

New Members – Fill in the information on the form below. Registration is \$25 with the electronic newsletter or \$35 for the printed newsletter. Send this form and payment to:

Steve Till
779 North Rd.
Carlisle, MA 01741.

Current Members – To update personal information, send this form to Steve Pennypacker. Send annual dues to:

Sheldon Apsel,
20 Malubar Lane
Newton, MA 02459

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Address, City, State, Zip: _____

Phone (home): _____ (work): _____

Email: _____ Pilot? _____ Rent/own? _____

EAA #: _____ IAC #: _____

Annual Dues:

_____ \$25.00 (color electronic email newsletter) _____ \$35.00 – printed/mailed newsletter

Calendar of Event

Nov 20th

**The Outlaw
Keene, NH
Brief at 11am
(Rain Date Nov 21)**

Dec 11th

**Chapter Meeting
Nashua**

Chapter 35 – Officers

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Chapter 35 - Web Site

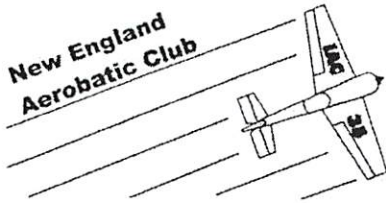
<http://iac35.aerobatics.ws>

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Chapter 35 mailing list signup (highly
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