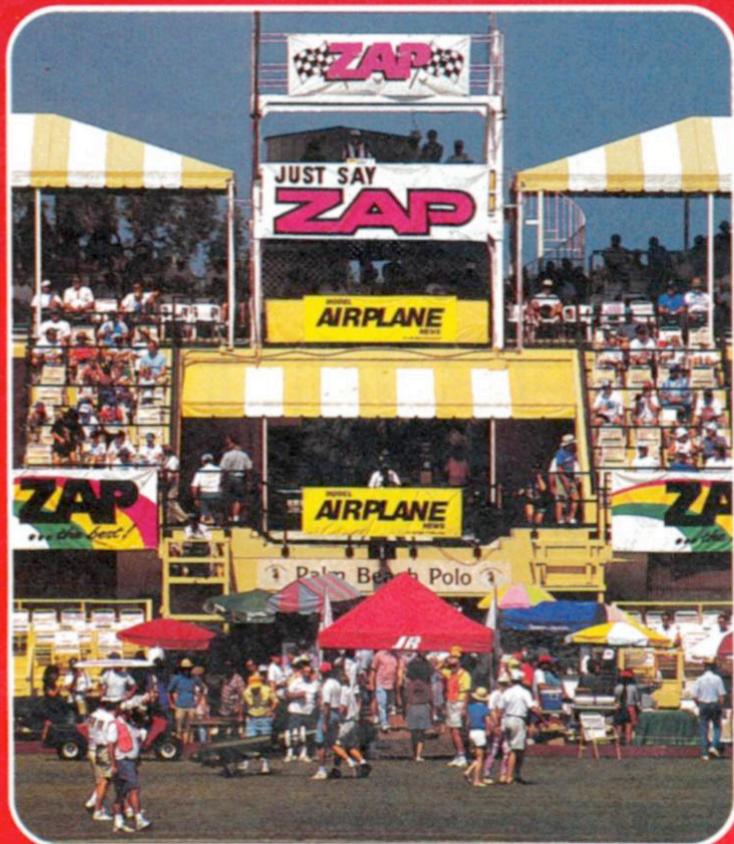


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TOP GUN

The best in scale competition



Greg Hahn—sixth in Expert; Ziroll plans; North American B-25J-1 Mitchell bomber; 118 in. span; 43 lb.; balsa and plywood; twin Zenoah G-38 gas engines; fiberglass cloth and Z-Poxy; automotive acrylic lacquer paint; JR PCM 10SX; Robart retracts, Glennis brakes, bomb-bay doors and six bombs, lights, flaps, interior and exterior detailing.



Charlie Chambers—Best in Military, Craftsmanship and 2-stroke Glow-Engine Performance; fourth in Expert; Don Smith plans; 1/8-scale P-61 Black Widow; 99 in. span; 70 in. long; 38 lb.; balsa and plywood; Zap; K&B glass cloth and paint; Pro Mark markings; two Webra 1.20s, JR PCM 10SX; flaps, retracts, lights, spoilers, tank drop.



David Hayes—second in Expert; scratch-built, 1/7-scale Ayres Thrush; 82 in. span; 14 lb.; O.S. .91 4-stroke; balsa; fiberglass canopy assembly; Zap adhesives; SuperPoxy finish; JR X-347 radio, operating flaps and crop-dusting equipment.



Jeff Foley—third in Expert; JMP kit; 1/8-scale Lockheed T-33A; 85 in. span; O.S. .91; Dynamax fan; Zap; K&B epoxy paint; JR PCM-10; JMP retracts.

PHOTO BY WALTER SODAS & GERRY YARRISH

by GERRY YARRISH

HELD IN FLORIDA at the fabulous West Palm Beach (WPB) polo grounds, Top Gun '96 brought together 62 contestants from the U.S., Canada, Germany, Venezuela and Brazil. The challenge? Becoming *the* Top Gun.

The April 25 to 28 event was the eighth scale invitational and the sixth held in Florida. With thousands of dollars in prize money, Top Gun has a larger purse than any other scale competition in the world. *Model Airplane News* and Pacer Technology* were again the main sponsors, and it's always a privilege to be associated with such a well-organized event.

The putting-green-smooth polo grounds are the perfect setting, food was plentiful, R/C vendors were there in force (in a large, air-conditioned tent),

and there was ample seating for the thousands of spectators. Seldom



Jack Diaz (Caracas, Venezuela)—Best Multi-Engine Performance; BVM kit; F-4 Phantom jet; 59 in. span; 86 in. long; 25 lb.; scale, clean-wing configuration; fiberglass, carbon fiber and foam; K&B and clear PPG paint; two BVM .91 engines with Viojett fans; BVM retracts and wheels. The engines have independent (but mixed) throttle control and independent mixture control, which is also mixed with the throttle channel.

do you find such a spectacular showcase of world-class scale masterpieces all in one place, but at Top Gun, this is the rule and not the exception.

WHAT'S A TOP GUN?

If you think getting invited to Top Gun would be impossible, you're wrong! To become eligible, a modeler must compete and place at the Scale

Right: Hal Parenti—ninth in Expert; scratch-built, 1/5.7-scale Ryan Fireball; 84 in. span; 28 lb.; balsa, plywood and foam outer wing panels; Parsons glass cloth; Z-Poxy; K&B epoxy paint; polyurethane clearcoat; Airtronics radio; Saito 270 tractor engine; O.S. .91 with Dynamax ducted fan; flaps, drop tanks, Robart retracts, tailhook, landing and navigation lights.



Above: Nick Ziroll's big P-38J Lightning comes in for a low pass; balsa and plywood; fiberglass cloth and acrylic paint; two Zenoah G-45 gas engines; Airtronics radio.



Corvin Miller—fifth place Expert; scratch-built Globe Swift; 80 in. span; 21 lb.; balsa and plywood; Zap; fiberglass cloth and Imron finish; O.S. twin 1.60; Airtronics, scratch-built retracts, flaps, lights, cockpit detail, opening doors.



Left: Jim Allen and Roger Shipley—fifth in Team Scale; BVM kit; 1/6-scale T-33 Red Knight; 80 in. span, 19 lb.; fiberglass, carbon-fiber and foam construction; Zap, Sikkens automotive paint; raised panels and scribed panel lines; BVM .91; Viojett fan unit; JR 10SX radio; 10 servos, gyro, onboard mixture control, BVM retracts, air brakes.



Left: Stephan Durrstein—eighth in Expert; FiberClassics kit; 1/10-scale Douglas DC-3; 126 in. span; fiberglass construction; epoxy paint; two O.S. .91 4-strokes; Multiplex, FiberClassics retracts with Graupner sail-winch servo, Kavan tires, flaps.



Pat McCurry—winner of Critics' Choice and Designer Scale awards; Messerschmitt Me-109G-6; 102 in. span; 93 in. long; 43 lb.; fiberglass fuselage, plug-in foam wings, built-up tail; Zenoah G-62 gas engine; APC 22x10 composite prop; fully detailed inside and out; 2 oz.-cloth finish; Z-Poxy; K&B paint; scratch-built functional flaps, retracts and spinner. Rumor has it that Pat might have a kit coming of this great-looking Luftwaffe warbird.



Bob Underwood—10th in Expert; scratch-built, 1/4.5-scale Hiperbipe; 73 in. span; 15.5 lb.; balsa and ply construction; Coverite; Du Pont automotive enamel paint; O.S. 1.60 engine; Airtronics Vision radio; Du-Bro wheels; operational doors. Bob is the president of the National Association of Scale Aeromodelers (created by him in 1977) and the AMA's education director. He was the recipient of a Special Achievement award for his great work with the World FAI committee on the rules (specifically, altering the weight limit from 7 to 10 kilograms, eliminating certain bonus points and lifting the ban on gaseous fuels so that turbines may now compete at FAI level).

Top Gun Numero Uno for a Third Time!

Congratulations to Mr. Top Gun '96—Terry Nitsch, who has, for an unprecedented third consecutive year, stood in the winners' circle. Terry campaigned his well-known silver and red Minute Men F-86 Sabre Jet built from a Bob Violett kit.

Terry's 14-pound, 1/8-scale F-86 is powered by a BVM .91 and a Viojett fan unit. The model is covered with Coverite's* Presto and Ditzler acrylic enamel paint. The F-86 is controlled with a JR* PCM 10SX radio. Terry's model is equipped with BVM retracts and Glennis* wheels, and it has flaps, air brakes and droppable wing tanks.

Terry had intended to fly his new BVM F-80 Shooting Star, which he unveiled at this year's Toledo Hobby Show, but technical problems prevented this. So for the last time (TG has a three-years-only rule), Terry flew his winning F-86 at the event. No one doubts that whichever model Terry shows up with next year, he'll be a strong contender. Will he do it a fourth time? We'll see.



Terry and Sheila Nitsch proudly show off their F-86 and the number-one Top Gun trophy.



TOP GUN Engineering Excellence



One of the most impressive models entered this year was the Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bomber built by Nick Zirola Jr. His 49-pound, 108-inch-wingspan Navy warbird was truly a work of art. The Avenger was powered by a Precision Eagle* 4.2ci gas engine turning a 24x10 prop and a Tru-Turn* spinner. A custom muffler system brings the exhaust to the scale exhaust pipe locations behind the radial cowl.

Nick painted and detailed his Avenger with automotive acrylic lacquer

paint and duplicated every single panel line, hatch, screw, rib stitch and hinge found on the full-size aircraft. Complete with a scratch-built dummy radial engine and custom-made Robart* retracts, the most inspiring feature was its complicated, articulated, folding-wing mechanism. Each outboard wing panel houses a custom pneumatic cylinder that is attached to an aluminum trunion assembly that, in turn, is attached to another cylinder in the inboard wing section. It's this twin cylinder and trunion assembly arrangement that allows the compound geometry to work as easily as it does, though the work involved certainly can't be considered easy. Nick also incorporated separate pneumatically operated wing-locking pins, and he even duplicated the scale indicator flags. In the full-

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Nick poses with his Grumman Avenger before his first-round flight. Nick uses a 10-channel Infinity radio.



Ian Richardson and Steve Elias—second in Team; BVM kit; 1/6.s-scale T-33 Thunderbird; 80 in. span; 16 lb.; fiberglass and foam; BVM .91; Viojett fan unit; Zap; Coverite Presto epoxy paint; Futaba* radio; split flaps, BVM retracts, tires and brakes.

Jerry Caudle and Bob Violet—High Static (Team), fourth in Team Scale; BVM kit; 1/6.s-scale P-80 Shooting Star; 80 in. span; 20 lb.; fiberglass, carbon fiber and foam construction; JPX T-250 turbine engine; Zap; Coverite Presto; PPG acrylic paint; JR 10SX radio; BVM retracts, wheels, brakes; split flaps, air brakes.



Masters, the Nationals, etc., and be recognized as a serious, competent scale modeler. Then the Top Gun selection committee must get to hear of you. To do this, send a letter of introduction to Top Gun promoter Frank Tiano, or ask someone else

to write you a recommendation.

If your modeling and piloting skills are good enough, you'll be invited. Every year, the top 20 contestants are invited to return the following year, but a model may be



Graeme Mears (right) and Dave Patrick—winners of Team Scale—pose with the winning Tiger Moth.



The Winning Team

Some modelers love to build scale model while others prefer to fly them. Team Scale brings the two types of modeler together, and teaming the best craftsman with the best pilot is a win/win situation.

This year's Team Scale was won by Graeme Mears and Dave Patrick. Graeme built the absolutely stunning deHavilland DH 82A Tiger Moth, and Dave flew it as if he had been flying it his whole life. Their efforts exemplify what Team Scale is all about—absolute perfection: the model and the piloting skills.

The Model

Graeme's 31-percent-scale DH 82A has a wingspan of 111 inches; its fuselage is 90 inches long and its wing area is approximately 3,500 square inches. The spruce and plywood model took approximately 1,500 hours to build from Frederick Beard plans. Its structure contains more than 1,000 fasteners and over 400 handmade metal fittings. Proctor* turnbuckles, Nelson Aircraft* and Micro Fasteners* hardware are also used.

The 35-pound model is powered by a 7.8hp Moki 3.6, 2-cylinder 2-stroke glow engine equipped with a Bisson muffler. The prop is a Clark Industries* 24 x 8, and the model is controlled with a Futaba radio.

The Tiger Moth is covered with Coverite SuperShrink cloth and finished with dope.

Incidentally, Graeme's Tiger Moth also won Best in Show at the 1996 Toledo show and the 1996 WRAM show.





With wings folded and torpedo-bay door open, the Avenger looks as if it's ready for sea duty aboard an aircraft carrier.

size Avenger, these flags were used to allow its pilot to visually confirm that the wing's locking pins were properly engaged.

Nick duplicated in fine detail the multi-hinge torpedo-bay doors that run along most of the fuselage bottom and the operating tailhook that runs on an internal track and swings into a down and locked position at the end of its travel. No details overlooked! Nick justly deserved the Technical Achievement award, but he did *not* deserve to lose his masterpiece on the first official round! After many successful shakedown flights back home in Long Island, NY, Nick's Avenger fell victim to an unexplained "flyaway." When he had retrieved his model, Nick said that though the Avenger had been extensively damaged, it was indeed repairable and would fly again.

entered only three times. This encourages contestants to build and fly new models, and it ensures a fresh crop of models.

The efforts exerted by TG contestants are awesome; some always compete with a brand-new model. Building a Top-Gun-quality model in 12 months is in itself a monumental task, and you have to allow enough time to learn how to fly it.



Garland Hamilton—seventh in Expert and Best Jet; BVM kit; 1/6.5-scale Lockheed DT-33B Sea Star; 80 in. span, 21 lb.; PPG Concept paint, Pro Mark and painted markings; JPX T-260 turbine engine fueled with propane; Airtronics 10-channel Infinity; flaps, scale cockpit, landing lights, speed brakes, BVM retracts, wheels, brakes.

Some specialize in a particular type of model and spend years perfecting it. The competition is very fierce and not everyone can take one of the top spots on the scoreboard, but for many whom I spoke to this year, just being asked to participate was reward enough.

Being recognized by your peers is priceless, and so are the modeling secrets you learn and the friends that you make at the event. Though there is only one first place



Geoff Combs and Alvin Brown—Best 4-Stroke Performance, third in Team; FiberClassics kit; 1/8-scale Douglas DC-3; 126 in. span; 34 lb.; fiberglass construction; two YS .91 4-stroke engines; Airtronics Stylus radio; FiberClassics retracts; 14x8 APC props; Deltron acrylic urethane; Pro Mark and painted decals; scratch-built shock-absorbing tail-wheel unit; flaps.

Sepp Uiberlacher—High Static Score (Expert), 24th in Expert. Scratch-built; 75 in. span; 16 lb.; all-wood construction; tissue/dope finish; HobbyPoxy paint; Super-Tigre 2500; APC 18x8 prop; Futaba PCM radio; homemade retracts; Sullivan tires, flaps.



Dave's Gorgeous Gannet

One modeler everyone was rooting for this year was "Mr. Scale" himself, Dave Platt of Palm Bay, FL. During the previous two Top Guns, bad luck followed Dave, who suffered mishaps involving two of his unique Grumman Mohawk OV-1Ds. But this year, Dave ended his heartbreak run with his beautiful Fairey Gannet A.S. 1.

Dave always chooses unusual aircraft to replicate, and the Fairey Gannet certainly is different. With its joined twin cockpits, counter-rotating props, intricate Fairey Youngman flaps and sub-fin-equipped tail, the Gannet is a true scale modeler's challenge. Dave and Dave Fogarty—his ace pit-crew chief of eight years—are justly proud of this elegant effort.



How's this for authentic flap detailing? Very scale.

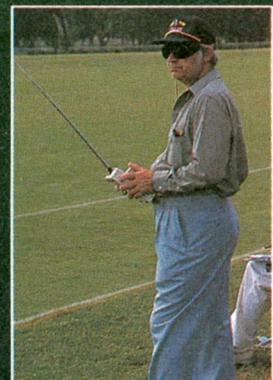
Specifications

Built in 1/7 scale, the Gannet has an 82-inch wingspan, weighs 19 pounds 15 ounces and is 70 inches long. Built using traditional balsa and plywood construction techniques, the model is covered with Dan Parsons* 0.6-ounce fiberglass cloth and K&B* polyester resin. Dave painted the model, including all the insignia, with K&B epoxy paint.

The O.S.* Max 1.08 glow engine runs on 10%-nitro fuel (18% oil—50% caster and 50% synthetic) and turns an APC* 15x8 prop. A custom, scratch-built muffler is fully enclosed by the engine compartment, and the exhaust is routed through flexible metal tubes that take it out through the scale exhausts aft of the wing's trailing edge. The spinner was scratch-built of turned aluminum. The landing gear are Platt* Competition Specials unit with modified Du-Bro* tires.

A 7-channel Ace R/C* MicroPro 8000 radio controls the model. Details include full rivet, panel lines and hatch details, flaps, retracts and a tail hook. Flap operation requires eight bellcranks.

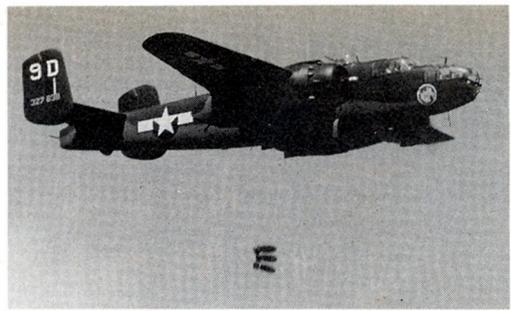
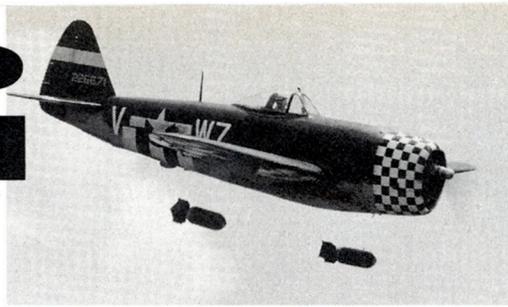
The details for this model were acquired by Dave Fogarty, who examined a full-size Gannet at the New England Air Museum near Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks, CT. Dave placed 33rd in Expert with a 94.417 static score and a total of 153.584.



Dave Platt taxis his Gannet out for its first flight.

TOP GUN

One reason why Greg Hahn made such accurate bombing runs with his B-25 was that he practices regularly with his Ziroli P-47 Thunderbolt. Here's the moment of release during a Friday practice flight.



Greg Hahn's B-25J Mitchell releases its ordnance during a bombing run.

TOP GUN WINNERS

EXPERT

Pos.	Pilot	Model	Static Score	Total
1	Terry Nitsch	F-86 Sabre Jet	96.167	189.084
2	David Hayes	Ayres Thrush	97.083	188.458
3	Jeff Foley	Lockheed T-33A	97.000	188.417
4	Charlie Chambers	P-61 Black Widow	97.667	188.334
5	Corvin Miller	Globe Swift	96.917	187.459
6	Greg Hahn	B-25J Mitchell	91.750	187.208
7	Garland Hamilton	Lockheed DT-33 Sea Star	97.500	186.458
8	Stephan Durrstein	Douglas DC-3	95.250	185.917
9	Hal Parenti	Ryan Fireball	94.417	185.250
10	Bob Underwood	Hiperbipe	96.583	185.083

TEAM SCALE

1	Dave Patrick/Graeme Mears	Tiger Moth	92.667	184.209
2	Steve Elias/Ian Richardson	Lockheed T-33	93.833	183.375
3	Geoff Combs/Alvin Brown	Douglas DC-3	90.250	181.750
4	Bob Violet/Jerry Caudle	P-80 Shooting Star	95.250	180.625
5	Roger Shipley/Jim Allen	Lockheed T-33	92.833	179.500

SPECIAL AWARDS

	Pilot	Model	
Critics' Choice	Pat McCurry	Me 109G	
High Static—Expert	Sepp Uiberlacher	Spitfire Mk 16E	97,833
—Team	Jerry Caudle	P-80 Shooting Star	95,250
Best Multi-Engine	Jack Diaz	F-4 Phantom Jet	
—Jet	Garland Hamilton	Lockheed DT-33 Sea Star	
—Civilian	Corvin Miller	Globe Swift	
—Military	Charlie Chambers	P-61 Black Widow	
—Biplane	Graeme Mears	Tiger Moth	
—Craftsmanship	Charley Chambers	P-61 Black Widow	
—Designer Scale	Pat McCurry	Me 109G	
—Foreign Entry	Graeme Mears (Canada)	Tiger Moth	
Engineering Excellence	Nick Ziroli Jr.	Grumman TBF Avenger	
Top Buns	Greg Hahn	—	

PERFORMANCE AWARDS

2-Stroke	Charlie Chambers	P-61 Black Widow
4-Stroke	Geoff Combs	Douglas DC-3
Gas Engine	Greg Hahn	B-25J Mitchell
Aerobatics	Bill Harris	T-33 Thunderbird

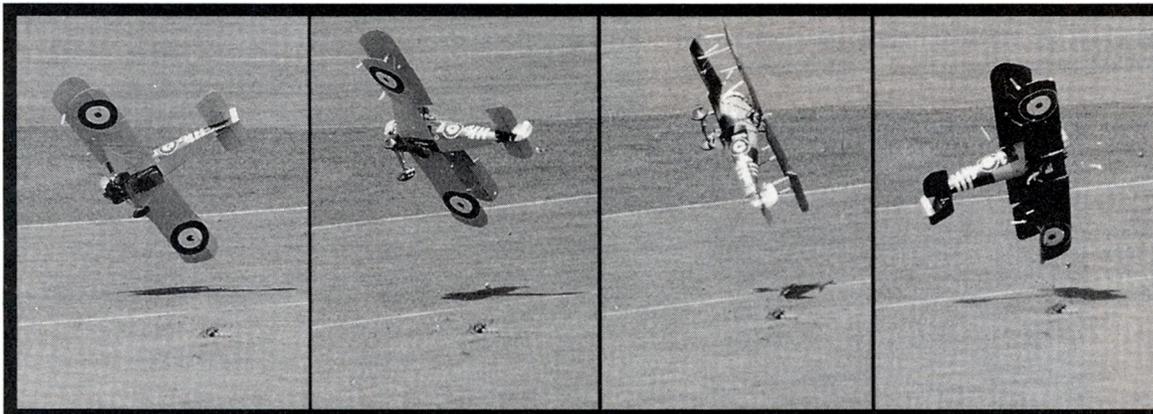
in Expert and in Team Scale, everyone comes away a winner.

This year, there were 29 single-engine monoplanes, 15 jets (three of which were powered by turbines), 11 multi-engine entries (10 twins and one four-engine multi) and seven biplanes. With such a wide range of model types, there truly was something for everyone's aviation interests.

During the four rounds, the attrition rate was very high; 15 models did not return to the pits—at least, not in one piece. A few lost their models to predatory palm trees, and for others, engine-outs, radio problems and midairs took their toll. Unlike in previous years, the wind wasn't to blame for this year's carnage; instead it was that ever-present Murphy and his unforgiving rule! Losing a topnotch model is a tough price to pay, but with time and hard work, most of the casualties will fly again.

SUPPORT AND STANDOUTS

At every Top Gun, we note the sidelines presence of manufacturers and technical support people who cheer on and help the contestants. It goes without saying that FTE's Frank Tiano and Pacer Technology were always on hand with Zap* glue for field repairs. Other regulars were Bob Walker



One of Top Gun's many victims: Tom Polapink's Sopwith Snipe loses an argument with gravity.

(Robart Mfg.), who is a wizard at recognizing and solving retractable-landing-gear problems; Mike Stokes (JR Radio*), who offers technical support to all the JR users on the field; Bob Violett (BVM*), who not only competes but also helps the other BVM jet pilots keep their engines tuned; and Jim Gerard (Gerard Enterprises*), who always helps Moki engine users with any difficulties.

In particular, I saw Jim Gerard work with Graeme Mears when he lost the engine in his deHavilland Tiger Moth. During the third round, pilot Dave Patrick lost engine power and throttle response while flying a loop. When he landed the stricken bird, they discovered that a cylinder had blown off the Moki's 2-cylinder crankcase. Jim Gerard helped Graeme to remove the engine and literally rebuild it right there on the sidelines. And they test-ran it in time for the fourth round! Even more amazing is that after this setback, Graeme and Dave took first in Team Scale with the beautiful Tiger Moth. I'm sure they're grateful for the tech support. Contestants support one another, too. It's part of the Top Gun "thing."

Though the stakes are high, cooperation predominates. I think they call that "sportsmanship."

Every entry was a standout, but these come particularly to mind:

- Critics' Choice winner—Pat McCurry with his big and beautiful Messerschmitt Me 109G;
- Best Craftsmanship, Best 2-Stroke Perfor-



Terry Nitsch's Hot Flash—a JPX turbine-powered showplane seen partway through a snowfall.

Top Gun History

The Top Gun Scale Invitational was first held in Coral Springs, FL, on April 21 through 23, 1989. Conceived by Frank Tiano and sponsored by *Model Airplane News* and Pacer Technology, this event brought together the country's best scale modelers for a high-stakes competition to see just who was the best. The stage was set for the grand shootout with 39 participants. When the dust cleared, Bob Fiorenze with his immaculate F/A-18 Hornet had emerged as the first Top Gun, and he went home with \$2,000 donated by *Model Airplane News*.

In 1990, the second Top Gun was held at the Spook Hill Flying Field in Arizona. The Team Scale class was added, as was the infamous Top Buns award, which is given by a group of anonymous people known as the "Ladies of Top Gun." Brian O'Meara was the first to triumph in this category!

In 1991, this prestigious event moved to its present location—West Palm Beach, FL, where the Palm Beach Aero Club members are wonderful hosts.

Top Gun Roundup

Year	Expert & Model	Team & Model
1996	...Terry Nitsch, F-86	Dave Patrick/ Graeme Mears, Tiger Moth
1995	...Terry Nitsch, F-86	Bob Violett/Jerry Caudle, P-80
1994	...Terry Nitsch, F-86	Dean Digiorgio/Bob Pickney, Beech C-45
1993	...Corvin Miller, Globe Swift	Bob Violett/Jerry Caudle, T33
1992	...Charlie Nelson, Waco VKS7F	Dean Digiorgio/Bob Pickney, Beech C-45
1991	...Mel Whitney, Hawker Sea Fury	Geoff Combs/Kim Foster, Curtiss Jenny
1990	...Ron Gilman, F-86	Gerry Garing/Bob Pickney, Piper J-3 Cub
1989	...Bob Fiorenze, F/A-18 Hornet	No team scale

mance, Best Military and fourth in Expert—Charlie Chambers with his impressive P-61B Black Widow;

- Best Gas-Engine Performance and sixth in Expert—Greg Hahn with his 118-inch-span B-25J-1 Mitchell bomber;
- Best Jet and sev-

enth in Expert—Garland Hamilton with his turbine-powered Lockheed DT-33B Sea Star;

- Second in Expert—David Hayes with his Ayres Thrush crop duster. Most people think you need a jet or a warbird to place high at Top Gun, but David proved that with great performance and static scores, a civilian model can place high.

TURBINES

The unmistakable sound of turbines—three, to be exact—was also heard this year, not just in demo flights but also in

Many people consider any model not built from a purchased kit to be a "scratch-built" model. Though scratch-building is involved to a certain degree, the correct term for a model built using drawings not drafted by the modeler himself is "plans-built." If a modeler sits down at a drawing board with photos and documentation, develops and draws his own plans and engineers every single piece and sub-assembly, then his model

is considered to be truly scratch-built.

At Top Gun this year, there was a special award for just such an effort—the Best Designer Scale Entry award, which was won by Pat McCurry for his beautifully executed Messerschmitt Me 109G.

Designer Scale Entries

Here's a roundup of the entries in this class:

Tom CzickP-47 Thunderbolt
 Rich FeroldiAlbatros
 Mark FrankelF4D Skyray
 Andreas GietzP-51 Mustang
 David HayesRockwell Thrush
 Art JohnsonF-82 Twin Mustang

Skip MastC-130
 Pat McCurryMe 109G
 Corvin MillerGlobe Swift
 Hal ParentiRyan Fireball
 Dave PlattFairey Gannet
 Tom PolapinkSopwith Snipe

Bud RoaneSopwith Pup
 Bill SetzlerPiper J-3 Cub
 Sepp UiberlacherSpitfire Mk 16E
 Bob UnderwoodHiperbiplane
 Jim WilkinsonJu-87 Stuka
 Nick Zirol Jr.Grumman Avenger
 Nick Zirol Sr.P-38 Lightning

TOP GUN Halftime Highlights

A show within a show! Top Gun's half-time antics alone were well worth the price of admission. This year's aerial ballet was exciting and fresh.

The excitement started with Chip Hyde flying a Lanier R/C 1/8-scale Extra 300s. He was followed by the team of Eric Dern and Don Lowe, who flew an impressive 16-foot-span, four-engine Lockheed Constellation. Powered by four Rossi .80 glow engines, with Don Lowe at the controls, the Constellation handles like some kind of gigantic pattern ship—smooth! Third up was Bob Fiorenze flying a scale Bell 222 helicopter. From takeoff to landing, Bob made everyone want to go out and become a heli pilot.

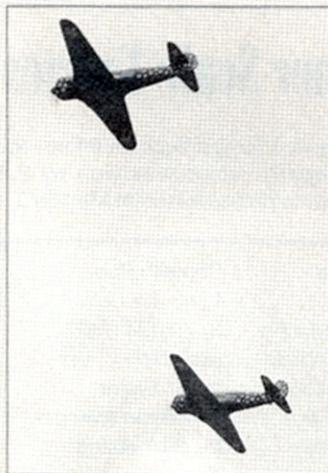
Next up was the German precision formation airshow team of Manfred Haller and Bernd Albinger. Having flown together for seven years, these guys can really carve up the sky with their Yak 11s built from FiberClassics scale kits. Powered by massive (but very quiet) 140cc 4-cylinder 3W* engines, these red-hot show-planes performed a graceful ballet that used up a lot of sky.

Fifth in the lineup was Geoff Combs flying Dennis Gergits' Carden Aircraft* Extra 300S. An accomplished TOC pilot, Geoff treated the crowd to an example of precision Tournament of Champions aerobatics that was beautiful and technically correct. Mike Barbee was his show announcer. Simply marvelous!

Next, how about 10 R/C combat models all flying at the same time! That's what the Top Gun R/C Combat Team did. Like a swarm of bees, these little Wild Things and Eliminators had the crowd on the edges of their seats.

Number seven was Mike Swift and his aerobatic helicopter demonstration—in a word, impossible! At least, that's how his maneuvers looked. Straight and level has no meaning for Mike. How about a loop going sideways? Maybe a hovering roll, or a four-point hammerhead stall turn with an inverted recovery? Then a great, inverted, engine-out autorotation. No, it did not land inverted—but almost! Wow!

Then there was the miniaturized jet pilot Captain Salami, aka Terry Nitsch, who flew his turbine-powered Hot Flash. Terry's routine (complete with simulated, from-the-cockpit commentary) was fast, high and precise. You felt as if you were watching one of the Thunderbirds



Don Muddiman lets go of his ZAP Flying Machine—next stop, unlimited aerobatics!

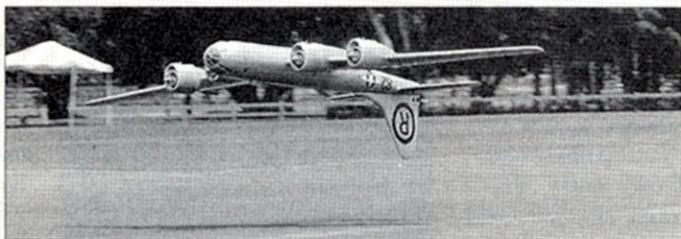


During the halftime show, a pair of Lanier RC giant Stingers flown by Bubba Spivey and Wayne Voyles spew out smoke.

practicing for a military airshow. Then the Hot Flash broke the scale sound barrier (with the help of pyrotechnics). And they said it couldn't be done!

Number nine was the rough-and-ready Lanier* R/C Show Team of Bubba Spivey and Wayne Boyle, who put their Lanier Giant Stingers through their paces. These guys really rock 'n' roll! Rolling circles, loops around a flat spin and hovering torque rolls were all on their ticket to ride.

In the number-10 slot was the very talented Jason Shulman, who did his thing with a model called the Renegade. Jason—also a TOC pilot—started with a hovering takeoff! Two crew



Inverted and low on the deck, Mack Hodges' B-29 roars down the centerline. The Enola Gay also performed loops and four-point rolls.

members held his Renegade by the wingtips and pointed it straight up. The hover started less than a wingspan from the ground, and Jason never looked back.

What was next? Try this: a 16-foot-span, 94-pound B-29 Superfortress bomber flying aerobatics!—not exactly prototypical flight realism, but exciting nevertheless. Flown by Mack Hodges, the B-29 was powered by four Quadra gas engines. Low and inverted (the tail almost touching the grass), the Enola Gay did loops, rolls and four-pointers that had everyone's attention.

And last, but not least, was Don Muddiman and his impressive ZAP Flying Machine. Don is famous for fast snap maneuvers—very tight ones! His performance ended with a landing approach that started straight overhead, just under the clouds. Dead-stick, of course, he aims the model straight at the ground and pulls out at the last possible moment. Add a lazy snap roll before touchdown and it's finished. Wow!



Piloted by Manfred Haller and Bernd Albinger of Germany, a pair of FiberClassics Yak 11s powered by 140cc gas engines perform an impressive formation flight.

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Jim Gerard of Gerard Enterprises helps Graeme Mears with his Moki engine. During a flight, Graeme lost a cylinder, and Jim helped to get his Tiger Moth back in the air for a win in Team Scale.



competition. Flying a JPX T-250 turbine-powered BVM P-80 Shooting Star, Jerry Caudle and Bob Violett placed fourth in Team Scale. Garland Hamilton's beautiful Lockheed DT-33B Sea Star (also built from a BVM kit) was powered by a

to fly a Top Gun turbine? See "Final Approach" in this issue.)

All this and the most beautiful scale model airplanes in the world to boot; how could anyone not feel that they got their money's worth at the 1996 Top Gun extravaganza?

I hope I have at least given you a feeling for what this Top Gun thing is all about. More than just a scale contest and a beautiful collection of scale models, Top Gun strives to present the very best of scale R/C aviation. Many thanks to all the hard-working individuals behind the scenes and to all the sponsors who helped

support this event.

If you haven't yet attended, try to pencil Top Gun 1997 into your schedule; you'll see firsthand what it's all about. See ya there!

**Addresses are listed alphabetically in the Index of Manufacturers on page 128.*

Foreign Entries

Name	Country	Model
Stephan Duerrstein	Germany	Douglas DC-3
Jack Diaz	Venezuela	F-4 Phantom Jet
Ralf Ploenes	Germany	F-80
Andreas Gietz	Germany	P-51 Mustang
Eduardo Estevez	Brazil	Rearwin Skyraider
Chris Burridge	Canada	Spitfire LF 16E
Sepp Uiberlacher	Canada	Spitfire Mk 16E
Graeme Mears	Canada	DH 82A Tiger Moth
Karl Gross	Canada	Nieuport 11

JPX T-260 turbine. And the third turbine-powered model was a 1/7-scale F-80—a modified JMP* T-33 kit—entered in Team Scale by Albert Araujo and flown by Rei Gonzalez. A Turbomin* turbine provided the thrust.

From what I saw of these jets, I know turbines are here to stay. (What is it like



Some of the many hard-working Palm Beach Aero Club members who helped to ensure that Top Gun ran smoothly.

Top Gun Staff

Contest director: Frank Tiano

Contest Manager: Ken Von Thaden

Chief judge: Tim Farrell

Assistant chief judge: Bill Holland

Static judges—Expert: Bob Curry (capt.), Lee "Zip" Henderson, Bill Deverna

Static judges—Team: Harvey Tomasian (capt.), Steve Harris, Charlie Beer

Score-keeper: Rosella Curry (score-keeping program: "Simply Scale" by Cliff Tacie)

Flight judges: Stan Alexander, Darlene Frederick, Wayne Frederick, Tom Kozel, Jim Parker,

Jim Semonian, John Smith, George Jenkins

Radio impound: Dawn Buckley