

Top Gun

Frank Tiano's scale
invitational celebrates
10 years

'98

by GERRY YARRISH &
LARRY MARSHALL



Right: this beautiful F4U Corsair earned Corvin Miller third place in Expert. Powered by a Saito 450 R3 3-cylinder, 4-stroke engine, the Corsair received a 96.417 Static score.



Left: powered by a twin in-line cylinder Moki, this Piper Super Cub was entered in Team Scale by Greame Mears and pilot Dave Patrick. The second place Team Scale entry also won the Best 2-stroke Performance award.

PHOTOS BY LARRY MARSHALL, GERRY YARRISH AND WALTER SIDAS



Dave Platt's newest creation: a T-28 Trojan. Dave also won the Engineering Excellence award with his model; specifically, for the operational canopy mechanism he built.



Team entry of Mark Frankel and pilot Richard Fong, this Beechcraft T-34 is powered by a Moki 1.8 and has a span of 99 inches; it took 15th place in Team Scale.

Powered by a RAM 750 turbine, this DH-100 Vampire Mk 1 is the work of Kerry Sterner. Kerry placed 10th in Designer Scale.



IF IT'S THE month of April and you're in West Palm Beach, FL, and there are dozens of beautiful scale model aircraft all around, where would you be? If you answered anything other than the Top Gun scale extravaganza, I suggest you haven't been reading enough model airplane magazines. Sponsored by Pacer Technology* and *Model Airplane News*, this year's Top Gun celebrated its 10th anniversary. As you might expect from the event's organizer, Frank Tiano, this year's competition was a grand, world-class event.



Sixth place Expert: Jim Wilkinson earned a static score of 96.417 with his beautiful FW-190A8. Built from Don Smith plans, the 190 is powered by an O.S. 300 and features scratch-built retracts.

For the 1998 competition, 68 contestants accepted Frank's invitation to compete in the Florida sun. All but nine were able to attend, and this brought the number of entries to 59. Even the weather cooperated this year, and the notorious Top Gun crosswinds seemed to abate for most of the 10th birth-

day bash. Top Gun includes three scale competition classes: Expert, Team and Designer. Static judging takes into account accuracy of color and markings, outline and the overall quality of craftsmanship. The four flight rounds that follow Static judging are judged for flight realism, placement and execution of the various mandatory and

optional maneuvers.

Beginning a day earlier than usual, static competition and test flights commenced on Wednesday. From the start, it seemed that things would be a little bit different this year, and there were no clear indications of who might have an edge until very late in the competition.



On the wing, Dave Platt's T-28 makes a high-speed flyby. Dave's 1/6-scale model has a wingspan of 82 inches, weighs 22 pounds and is powered by a Moki 1.8.



Left: caught at the moment of turbine ignition, the Lim-6bis delivers an impressive fire plume as the Golden West turbine comes to life. Below: one of the more unique Team Scale entries was this Lim-6bis. Entered by Tad Krzanowski and Jim Hiller, the Golden West-powered model is the Polish version of the Soviet MIG-17F. It finished in fifth place.



Axis powers prevail in designer scale



Displaying his new Me-109E for static competition, Jeff Foley gives us a sense of scale for his new Top Gun entry.



Designer scale is a class in which the participant must design, build and fly the aircraft entered. This year, two great guys, flying two great German fighter plane models, took first and second in this prestigious scale-modeling class.

The paint was barely dry on Jeff Foley's Me-109E when he rolled it out of his trailer this year. Gerry and I were in love with the model, though, as both of us like the

E model of this classic fighter, and Jeff has done it in just the right size for our transportation limitations. In 1:4.5 scale, the wingspan on this 22-pound craft is 86.6 inches. It flies like a dream—at least, when Jeff is on the sticks—and, with the exception of one crosswind landing that gave Jeff a bit of trouble, the narrow landing gear just wasn't a problem during takeoffs and landings. Jeff powers the model with a Moki 1.8, and it doesn't lack for power. Rumor has it that Jeff is going to offer this plane as a kit.

Roy Vaillancourt beat back the Allies to take second place. Less than 2 points behind Jeff, Roy put in a solid performance with his FW-190A8. He told us that the functional and scale air-cooling fan on the front of the 190 really solved some overheating problems he'd had in the past with the fully cowled Quadra 65. After having the color chips matched, Roy painted the model with household latex, and his 190 is magnificent. Roy sells everything necessary (except for his modeling talent) to create your own FW-190.

So if you're up flying your Spitfire or Mustang, watch your six, as you might just find Foley or Vaillancourt trying to increase their kill total. Congrats to both of these fine gentlemen.



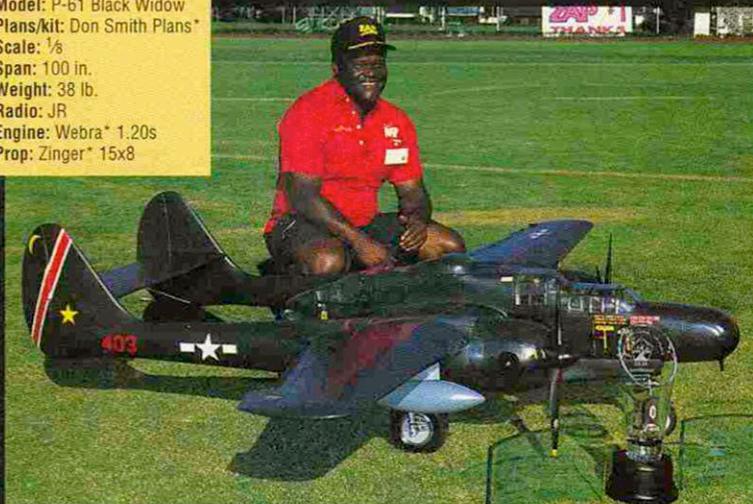
Roy Vaillancourt and his FW 190A8. Roy uses household latex paint to finish his models.

Top Gun's Number Ones!

There are three categories of competition at Top Gun: Expert class is where most of the solo participants compete; Designer class is for people who have designed the airplanes they fly; and Team Scale is an opportunity for a builder to find a pilot and compete as a team. "Mr. Top Gun" is awarded to the person who has the highest total score, regardless of the category in which he competed.

First place Expert and Mr. Top Gun:

Charlie Chambers
Model: P-51 Black Widow
Plans/kit: Don Smith Plans*
Scale: 1/8
Span: 100 in.
Weight: 38 lb.
Radio: JR
Engine: Webra* 1.20s
Prop: Zinger* 15x8



First place Team Scale:

Mariano Alfafara (right)/Dave Pinegar
Model: J-3 Clipped-wing Cub
Plans/kit: Mike Gretz plan
Scale: 1/4

Span: 86 in.
Weight: 12 lb.
Radio: Futaba*
Engine: O.S. 1.60
Prop: Master Airscrew* 15x8

Brian O'Meara competed with his beautiful O.S. 300-powered Hawker Sea Fury. Built from Jerry Bates plans, the model has an 82-inch span and Gene Barton retracts.



ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW

There was a flock of new, never-before-seen models in the running. A big change of pace came from Garland Hamilton, who traded in his turbine-powered Lockheed DT-33B drone director for a Grumman F8F Bearcat built from Jerry Bates plans. Spanning 78 inches and powered by an O.S.* 300 4-stroke engine, Garland's model included a beautifully engineered, scale set of articulating



The Team Scale entry of Glenn Torrance and Tom Kosewski, this Fokker E.V flew very well. With a wingspan of 82 inches and weighing 14 pounds, the 1/4-scale model was powered by an O.S. 1.60 and took 12th place.

First place Designer Scale:

Jeff Foley
Model: Me-109E
Scale: 1/4.5
Span: 86.6 in.

Weight: 22 lb.
Radio: JR*
Engine: Moki 1.8
Prop: Menz* 18x8



landing gear. Corvin Miller, whom everybody knows flies nothing but civilian Globe Swifts, showed up this year with a modified Ziroli* F4U Corsair. Powered by a Saito* 450 R3 3-cylinder radial 4-stroke engine, Corvin's new Navy fighter sported a flawless, high-gloss finish duplicating the paint job of the full-size restoration he copied.

Another jet jock who traded in his jet for a piston-powered fighter was Jeff Foley. Jeff has flown a Jet Model Products*

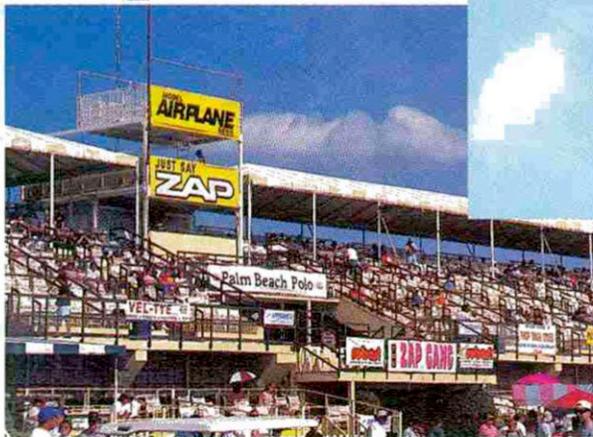
T-33A for several years and placed third last year in Expert. Jeff's weapon of choice this year was his own-design Me-109E-7. With a wingspan of 86.6 inches and powered by a Moki* 1.8 glow engine, Jeff's composite-and-wood Messerschmitt is simply gorgeous. Kerry Sterner can always be counted on to have something different, and this year, he entered a turbine-powered DH-100 Vampire. Entered in the Designer class, Kerry's twin-tail jet has a 96-inch span and is powered by a RAM* 750 kerosene burner.

Two other never-seen-before models (each turbine powered) were entered in Team Scale. Albert Adujo and Rei Gonzalez teamed up with a beautiful 1/8-scale Dassault Mirage 2000. Their delta-wing jet has a wingspan of 65 inches and is powered by the RAM 750 turbine. The other team entry was a Lim-6bis (Polish designation for the MiG-17F Fresco C.) by Tad Krzanowski and Jim Hiller. This unusual Soviet-bloc fighter had the most unique harmonics signature at the meet. Whenever it flew, the Lim-6bis sounded like it was growling! Power comes from the Golden West* turbine for this 56-inch-span, 1/7-scale model.

Toned down a few notches from the

Top Gun

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Nick Zirola Jr. prepares to deliver a scale torpedo with his 1/8-scale Grumman Avenger. Power comes from an Eagle 4.2 gas engine for this 108-inch span, 49-pound Navy torpedo/bomber.

fire-breathing turbines was Canadian Jean Chevalier's 1/3-scale Ryan STM primary trainer. Jean has been flying a 1/4-scale Ryan ST for several years and wanted something new for the 10th anniversary. He enlarged the plans for the old kit and scratch-built his larger version. Powered by a Quadra* 52 and spanning 120 inches, the STM was very realistic and stable. With the model weighing 36 pounds, however, Jean said he wanted to fit his Ryan with a larger, more powerful engine.

GROUND SUPPORT

One thing is for sure if you compete on that field of green in West Palm Beach: you will meet some of the big-name manufacturers. Bob Violett is always on the flightline, and he gives his support to all BVM* jet pilots. Bob and Silvia Walker of Robart Mfg.* are also usually on hand. Bob has, on several occasions, helped troubleshoot retract problems and has even replaced damaged retract parts so a pilot could finish the event.

When it comes to Moki engines, Jim Gerard of Gerard Enterprises* often

lends a hand in the pits to get those powerful 2-stroke glow engines running properly.

As in all competitions, models do get damaged at Top Gun, and Pacer Technology is always available with various Zap* products to do field repairs. It is truly amazing to see a badly damaged model resurrected at Top Gun to fly again.

A relatively new sponsor at Top Gun is Jerry Connelly of Wildcat Fuels*. This year, Jerry donated all the glow fuel for the event. One contestant who was very pleased about this was Robert Benson, who teamed up with Geoff Combs to fly his T-34C. Robert had been having a lot of difficulty with his engine overheating and had tried everything short of rebuilding it to get it to run. Jerry suggested Robert try some Wildcat fuel, and that did

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Tom Polapink placed third in Designer Scale with his Pfalz D-IIIa. Tom's WW I fighter has a span of 74 inches and is powered by an O.S. 1.20.

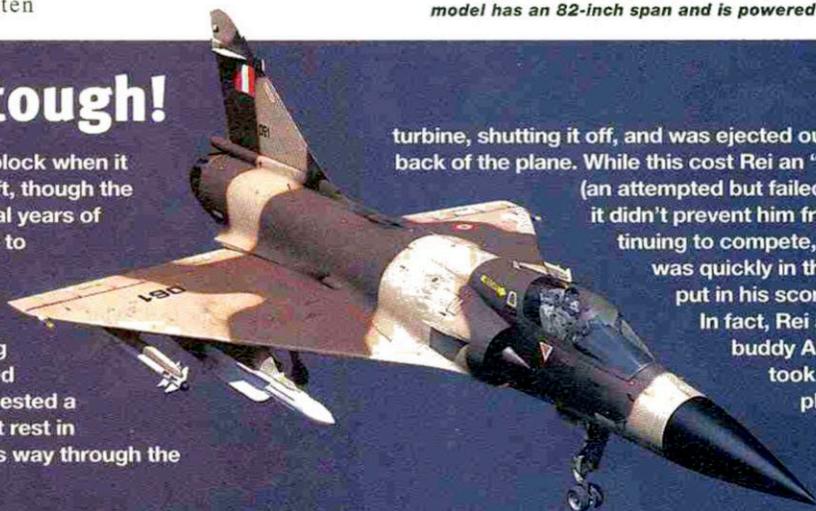


Jim Sandquist (right) and Wayne Stewart hold Wayne's P-47 Thunderbolt while pilot Frank Tiano demonstrates the retracts for the flight judges. Wayne and Frank entered Team Scale this year with the mighty Jug. The 1/8-scale model has an 82-inch span and is powered by a Brison 4.2.

Turbines are tough!

Turbines are the new kids on the block when it comes to powering model aircraft, though the modeling community now has several years of safely using them, and we're coming to expect great reliability from these power systems.

Rei Gonzalez of R.A. Microjets did a little experiment at Top Gun. During takeoff with his Mirage 2000, powered by a RAM 750 turbine, his turbine ingested a hunk of Wayne Stewart's P-47 (may it rest in "piece"). The chunk of balsa made its way through the



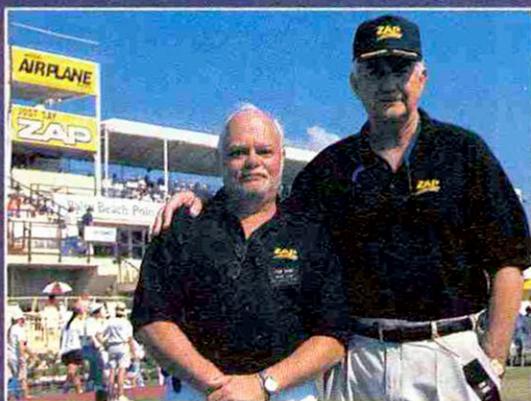
turbine, shutting it off, and was ejected out the back of the plane. While this cost Rei an "attempt" (an attempted but failed flight), it didn't prevent him from continuing to compete, as he was quickly in the air to put in his scored flight. In fact, Rei and his buddy Albert took third place in team scale.

The people who make it happen

A decade ago, Frank Tiano had a dream. He wanted to show off scale modeling to the non-modeling community. He dreamed of bleachers full of parents, with their kids, watching some of the best modelers in the world fly museum-quality scale models. Because of who he is, Frank has made his dream come true and because of it, he's caused many of us who are scale modelers to create dreams of our own. Often these dreams involve the atmosphere and prestige that is Top Gun, but always they are centered on our next scale project. To say that the modeling community has benefited from Frank's efforts is far too much of an understatement, as Top Gun has done more to improve the public's view of model aviation than anything else. Even within our own ranks, it has become a rallying cry; a point of reference for the upper crust of scale modeling.

Frank would be the first to acknowledge that he hasn't done it all on his own. Herschel Worthy of Pacer Technology, one of the principal sponsors, helps Frank in some of the organizational affairs that are required to put together Top Gun. We at *Model Airplane News* try to help in our way, and we're really proud to have been a major sponsor of the event for its entire 10-year existence. The many other sponsors who help out by defraying costs and providing prizes are very much a part of what makes Top Gun as good as it is. The folks at the West Palm Beach Polo Grounds are also to be applauded for providing an unbelievable facility for Top Gun's participants as well as for its spectators.

One of the icons of Top Gun is Sam Wright. Sam has been the announcer for Top Gun since its



Frankie T. (left) and Herschel Worthy are very proud of Top Gun's 10-year run.

inception, and he does a remarkable job of bringing the flying to life, explaining the maneuvers being flown and talking about the details of the aircraft themselves; he is the connection between the pilots and the spectators. He'll tell you that he has the best view in the place, but he also

works harder than anyone else to maintain a level of interest and excitement throughout the event, and Top Gun wouldn't be Top Gun without him.

It takes a lot of judges to properly deal with all the static and flight judging, and Frank has always been fortunate to get good people who are willing to give of themselves to make it a fair contest. While

some of their expenses are paid, these guys don't do what they do for the money; they just love model airplanes and scale contests.

And then there's Jake; Jake is the cornerstone of Top Gun. Without him, I'm sure Top Gun would be less than it is. Jake is Frank's dog, and when Frank starts feeling frazzled because five people need him to be in five different places, Frank can turn to him for support. Jake, keep up the good work so that we can have another 10 years of Top Gun.



Sam Wright, "The Golden Voice of Top Gun," is always heard but seldom seen. Sam has announced every Top Gun but one.



The hard-working Top Gun judges and crew (back row, standing, left to right): (Chief Judge) Bill Holland, (FJ) Mike Marecki, (FJ) Charlie Beer, (FJ) Tom Kozel, (FJ) Mike Bacon, (SJ) Jim Parker, (FJ) Harry Andren, (scribe) Dick Voight, (FJ) John Smith. Front row, kneeling, left to right: (SJ) Lee Henderson, (Captain Static Judge) Bob Curry, (Head Score Keeper) Rosella Curry, (FJ) Cliff Tacie, (FJ) Jim Semonian. Not shown: (Asst. Chief Judge) Bill Deverna, (FJ) George Jenkins.



Top Gun's top dog, Jake.



Sepp Uiberlacher flew this beautiful Hawker Tempest to fourth place in Designer Scale. The 83-inch fighter is powered by a Moki 1.8.

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the trick. Robert went on to finish in seventh place in Team Scale. Of course, the event itself could not be what it is today were it not for the generous contributions of all the sponsors, big and small, who support Top Gun. All are to be thanked for their help.

HOT ENGINES

One of the major challenges in any competition is maintaining a reliable engine to



This Ziroli P-38 Lightning was flown by Greg Hahn. Powered by twin Zenoah G-38s, the Lightning flew very well until an electronic glitch put it into a nearby pond. Greg's comment: "It happens!"

get you through the event. If you are to finish first, first, you have to finish. Engine problems cause the majority of incomplete

flights, and the stakes are very high when it comes to making thrust.

Flying his beautiful, all-silver B-29

Top Gun halftime show is super



This year, Mac Hodges' B-29 was outfitted with a scale Bell X-1.

Each day at Top Gun, there is a halftime show. Orchestrated by Bubba Spivey of Lanier RC*, the show is a super production, with almost no down time and yet a large variety of model aircraft were exhibited; everything from turbines breaking the scale sound barrier to guys



Bubba Spivey, the ring master of the Top Gun halftime show, works very hard to make it all happen.

to guys

flying R/C combat. Bubba and his buddy Wayne put on a team aerobatic show that always excites the crowd, and Jason Shulman puts his Extra through its paces. Geoff Combs also wows the crowd with his very large Extra.

For the last couple of years, Chip Hyde has put in some show-stopping performances. His superb power management abilities allow him to fly very low and very slow, and it's a real treat to watch him fly. This year, Chip was doing low-level 4-point rolls with his 42-percent

Ultimate. The neat thing was that he did them less than half a wing length above the ground. That's right; no typo here. He would enter the maneuver in level flight and when he rolled to the first point, he would increase altitude just enough to clear the wing and then drop back down once he rolled inverted. The procedure was repeated to negotiate the third point of the roll. Note also that he was flying so slowly that this entire sequence was done in less than the length of the runway. Magnificent!

A crowd-pleaser has always been Mack Hodge's large B-29 that he flies like an aerobatic

plane, doing point rolls and low inverted passes. This year he and his buddies added a new twist: they dropped an X-1 from the wing and glided it down to a landing. Just before touchdown, they fired a solid propellant rocket and powered it up in a spectacular fashion, doing a few victory rolls on the way down the second time.

The spectators really enjoy the halftime show, and it's a good time for the competitors to relax and enjoy the show themselves. As Greg Hahn said, "Top Gun is a five-day fun fly with a few competition flights thrown in." Hope you can make it next year.



Top Gun



Eighth place in Designer Scale went to Phil Sibille with his Piper Super Cub.



Jean Chevalier flew this scratch-built, 1/3-scale Ryan STM primary trainer. Jean placed 12th in Expert.

all that can be achieved in the world of scale modeling. For some, Top Gun means victory, while for others, it means more hours spent at the building board. But for all who attend, it is a time for fun and recognition. For even to be *invited* to West Palm Beach means you are the best.

The only really good way to understand all the elements and personalities that go into this thing called "Top Gun" is to experience it yourself. We can only hope to scratch the surface and show the very obvious points here. Summed up, Top Gun is

the event in which the very best of the best in scale aircraft modeling compete, adapt, endure and prevail.

**Addresses are listed alphabetically in the Index of Manufacturers on page 142.*



Free flight at Top Gun

Top Gun is not just an R/C event; it's a scale event, and diehard scale modelers do it all. This year there were two free-flight events. The first, sponsored by Herr Engineering, was a traditional, rubber-powered scale event. As the likes of Barbee, Siewert, Parenti, Platt and others took the field, there was a lot of laughing, joking, and having fun. But when the winding started, pilots became serious, as the competition had begun. In the end, Wayne Siewert showed all that he was king of the hill with his Found.

But the revelry didn't stop there. Rich Uravitch is now sponsoring a Jetex scale event, so rather than winding rubber, these guys were lighting fuses. It was clear from the results that it has been a while since these guys have flown Jetex, as the results were less than stellar. But there was that addictive smell of propellant burning, the *Psssst* ... sound that many of us used to love to hear, and even cries of "Don't touch the motor!" that we used to shout, mid-giggle, at the end of a flight. Rich, you've got me hooked ... gotta get myself a Jetex plane and start building.

