MODEL AIRPLANE NEWS AND INVITATIONAL

by TOM ATWOOD

THOUSANDS OF model aviation buffs bent on having a good time flocked to sunny West Palm Beach, FL, this year to witness the fourth annual Top Gun Invitational. It was held on May 7 to 10 on the expansive, well-kept, putting-green-like grounds of the West Palm Beach Polo Club. Model Airplane News and Pacer Technology again co-sponsored the scale meet, which many now regard as the pinnacle of scale competition. A raft of contributing sponsors donated prizes and prize money as well, which only boosted the excitement of this highly competitive, and often dramatic, event.

Top-level, invitation-only scale modelers from across the country and, indeed the world, competed for thousands of dollars in prizes in Expert and Team Scale classes. No less than 53 models were campaigned, and many more were exhibited on the flight line and in demo flights. A walk down the flight line revealed the finest examples of model engineering and scale artistry. I can only say that if you're a modeler at heart and you attend a Top Gun, the inspiration to venture into serious scale building (or to do so again) is nearly inescapable.

We extend our congratulations to all of the winners, and particularly to Charles Nelson, who took 1st place in Expert with his Waco (built from Paul Matt plans) and to Dean DiGiorgio and Bob Pickney, who took 1st in...

Above: this beautiful P-51D was scratch-built of balsa and ply from Dave Platt plans by father-and-son team Jim and Maury Maroney. It's clad in 1/600-inch-thick aluminum (compound-curve areas are covered with aluminum-backed duct tape). Inset: note the amazing finish on the fully sheeted, glassed, aluminum-clad, built-up wings.

Left: as usual, the crowds were mesmerized by this, the grandest of all scale competitions.

Below left: tents on the flight line shelter scale masterpieces (and their builders) from the West Palm Beach sun. 

Below: Top Gun winners pose after the award ceremony. Frank Tiano, on his knees at center, was quite moved by the moment.
ACER TECHNOLOGY PRESENT

Jim Wilkinson scratch-built this 1/4-scale JU87-B Stuka. The plane was first flown on during flight practice. WS—91 inches; WT—20 pounds; E—St 2500, &H spark ignition; P—Zinger 16x6.

Charlie Nelson, 1st-place winner in Expert Class, built in the glory of coming out on top at Top Gun. See page 36 for stats on his winning Waco.

Left: Art Johnson's scratch-built, aluminum-clad P-35A is an eye-catcher at any scale event. WS—86 inches; WT—22 pounds; E—O.S., 3500; P—Zinger 16x10.

The Ki-183 charges into the air. Lee Rice scratch-built the 1/3-scale aircraft. WS—86 inches; WT—17.5 pounds; E—St 2500; P—Zinger 16x6.

Wayne Siewert's Perso Mooney featured amazing detail. Note the custom-molded glass canals on the tailplane. WS—88 inches; WT—10 pounds; E—O.S., 1.08; P—Graupner 3-blade 14x6.

Richard Rawle (pilot and designer) and Peter Guiver (builder) brought this scratch-built, 1/4-scale de Havilland 99 Mosquito all the way from Great Britain, thanks to the UPS sponsorship (UPS also transported the other British contestants and planes.) It's covered with doped Japanese tissue that has a final coat of two-part epoxy lacquer. WS—120 inches; WT—50 pounds; E—Zenoah G-38; P—19x10.

Bill McCallie's P-47D includes in-flight control of fuel mixture, flaps, fuel-tank drop, a gear door and retracts. Retracts are operated by a sail-witch servo connected to a Gene Barton gear mechanism, for slow, scale-like retraction without the need to pump air. WS—81 inches; WT—23.5 pounds; E—Webra Bully; P—Zinger 18x8.

Below: George Russo placed 7th in Expert with this Nieuport 28 built from Proctor plans. WS—84 inches; WT—15 pounds; E—Enya R-12; P—16x8.

Bill Carper shows off his beautiful 1/6-scale P-47D. Built from a Baker kit (now carried by Yellow Aircraft), the plane is covered with aluminum tape. Available from Cleveland Specialty, the tape comes in 6-inch-wide, 60-yard rolls. WS—38 inches; WT—24 pounds; E—St 2500; P—16x6.
This Yellow Aircraft Spitfire XIV built by David Voglund is modeled after a restored airplane owned by Rolls Royce Ltd. It carries 4.5 pounds of No. 12 birdshot to "get the tail down." WS—36 inches; WT—25 pounds; E—Sachs 5.6; P—Zinger 3x10.

This graceful 1/4-scale Rearwin Skyraider, scratch-built by Eddo Estaves of Brazil, was a testament to honest modeling. Eddo machined the hardware himself. The fuselage is covered with nylon, and the wings with Sig Coverall painted with automotive enamel. WS—100 inches; WT—26 pounds; E—O.S. Gemini twin; P—26x10.

Ed Newman shows stitching detail on underside of the Storch's fuselage. Above: the 1/4-scale Storch is an all-balsa-and-PLY airplane adapted from enlarged Svenson plans. WS—114 inches; WT—22 pounds; E—O.S. 1.85; P—Zinger 10x6/10.

Even from the bottom, there's no doubt it's a Spacewalker. Bruce Tharp scratch-built this 1/4-scale beauty. WS—104 inches; WT—21 pounds; E—ST 3000; P—18x10.

Check Fuller's "Daring Damsels of the Sky" Super Stearman majestically pushes smoke. Each wing has two, full-length, Douglas-fir spars. WS—30 inches; WT—37 pounds; E—Sachs 5.6; P—Zinger 22x12.

Marc Levy of Paris, France, scratch-built this gorgeous Sirius TR-325, which sports the same type of paint that was used on the original plane. The plane has a fiberglass fuselage and foam wings covered with balsa and Japanese tissue. WS: 82 inches; WT: 22 pounds; E—Zenoah G-62; P—Menl 22x12.

Frank Thomas's 1/4-scale, clipped-wing Spitfire Mk XIVE is covered with 1/4-ounce fiberglass that has been impregnated with four coats of clear paint rather than resin (sanded each time) to save weight. WS—38 inches clipped to 26 inches; WT—21 pounds; E—ST 2550; P—World Engines 16x8.

Top: Mike Booth's scratch-built Hawker Fury biplane sparkles in the Florida sun on the ground and in the air. Above: Mike is working on his plane in preparation for flying competition. WT—22 pounds; E—Zenoah G-38; P—22x6.

David Toyer—one of the British contingent sponsored by UPS—brought this 1/4-scale Trent Motor. Scratch-built from Boudington plans, it's made of balsa and ply, with fiberglass nacelles and outer foam-wing pieces. WS—76 inches; WT—16 pounds; E—ST. 405e; P—Graupner 10x6.

Above: the "Spitfire" gliders were a hit in this competition. Above: the "Spitfire" gliders were a hit in this competition.
Bob Underwood, AMA technical director, scratch-built this Stormavik low-attack plane. WS—81 inches; WT—16.5 pounds; E—O.S. 1.08 twin; P—Zinger 15x6.

This ¾-scale Skyraider gets well-deserved attention at any scale meet! Diego Lopez took 3rd in Expert, WS—60 inches; WT—36 pounds; E—Wehr Bully; P—Zinger 16x6/16.

Kim Foster’s Curtiss Jenny, built from a Proctor kit, sported closed-loop cable controls just like the original. It took Kim approximately 700 hours to build this plane. WS—61 inches; WT—8 pounds; E—Laser 76; P—Zinger 15x7.

Corvin Miller’s scratch-built, ¾-scale Globe Swift won Best Civilian last year and 10th in Expert! This year, it was Best Civilian and 6th! WS—80 inches; WT—24 pounds; E—O. S. 1.60 twin; P—Zinger 16x6/16.

The ¾-scale C-47 built and flown by Ross Chizek and Barry Zaling ends its last flight after one engine failed (it fell several hundred yards from the buildings). Earlier, Ross and Barry assemble the giant model for competition. WS—144 inches; WT—44 pounds; E—Quadra 35s; P—Zinger 10x8s.

Bob Underwood, AMA technical director, scratch-built this Stormavik low-attack plane. WS—81 inches; WT—16.5 pounds; E—O.S. 1.08 twin; P—Zinger 15x6.

Hal Parent’s Fireball had both jet and tractor-prop propulsion. A failed elevator servo during takeoff removed it from competition in the later rounds. How many rivets?—21,000. WS—72 inches; WT—17 pounds; E—S-F.75 tractor and O.S. .66; P—TF 16x6 and Kress Jello fan.

David and Tony Matchione teamed up on this Bob Violet kit T-33. The canopy close-up looks almost eerie in its scale-like appearance. The plane was an exciting sight in the air and on the ground, and it took 7th in Team Scale. WS—80 inches; WT—15.5 pounds; E—BVM .91; P—Violet fan.
Charlie Nelson’s 1st-place winner—a scratch-built 1/5th-scale Waco YMF57F shown in a landing approach. Designed from Paul Matt plans, the balsa, plywood and fiberglass model has aluminum fairings at the wing roots and vertical stab. The plane is a scale replica of the last standard-cabin Waco produced, and it includes retractable landing lights and onboard fuel-mixture control. fiberglass corrugated ailerons were cast in moldings, impressive! WS—73.4 inches; WT—15 pounds; E—O.S. .91; P—Viojet fan.

Charlie Chambers built this gorgeous 1/7th-scale F-16C using Yellow Aircraft and Bob Viorel plans. Note the functional speed break at the tail fins. WT—15 pounds; E—BVMM .82; P—Viojet fan.

Bill Harris’s BVM F-86 gleams like gold. It took 10th in Expert. WS—58 inches; WT—12.75 pounds; E—BVMM .81; P—Viojet fan.

Shailesh Patel, who took the coveted “Top Guns” award, scratch-built this 1/7th-scale F16 Corsair from his own plans. WS—62 inches; WT—26 pounds; E—Webral Bully; P—Zinger 16x8.

Is this immortal face not recognized the world over? It is, of course, scale guru Dave Piatt. When Piatt wasn’t announcing, he and Ron Ellis campaigned this impressive, well-weathered 1/5th-scale Zero built from Piatt plans. WS—80 inches; WT—19 pounds; E—O.S. 1.08; P—Zinger 16x8.

Right: The scale details and compound curves of Bob Fiorello’s 1/7th-scale F-18 Hornet are a sight to behold. Above: Bob’s Yellow Aircraft F-18 is scrutinized closely in the judging competition. The plane later went down when it lost an engine. WS—72 inches; WT—27 pounds; E—O.S. .91s; P—Dynamax fans.

Bob Viorel and Jerry Caufield took 2nd in Team Scale with this BVM F-16C, and Jerry picked up the Craftsmanship award for build. Not only did he use Ultrascale paints (all Ditzler) with a final flat coat, which was then scuffed. Aeroloft markings finish this piece of art. WT—18 pounds; E—BVMM .85; P—Viojet fan.

Above: Dick Hanson built this 1/7th-scale Albatross DVA from a Proctor kit. Photo by John Jandt. Left: Detail of Spandau guns. WS—30 inches; WT—23 pounds; E—Enya V-240 with G&H spark igniter; P—Zinger 16x8/10.
Sam Wright (left center, with toy heli) and Dave Platt (right center, in conference with the heli owner) served ably as announcers throughout the competition.

Frankie T., Top Gun kingpin, shows intense concentration during the competition.

Terry Nitsch poses with his BVM F86. He ought to smile; he took 4th place in Expert! WT—13 pounds; E—BVM .91; P—Viojet fan.

Bob Fiorenze’s Yellow Aircraft F-14 Tomcat was one of several show-stoppers. Functional swing wings pivot through 68 degrees in flight. The drive mechanism is as big as a double-size sail-winch servo. WS—swept (62 inches); extended (88 inches); WT—22 pounds; E—Iwin O.S-.81s; P—Dynamax.

Built from Platt plans, Jeff Foley’s Zero scored an impressive 5th place in Expert. WS—30 inches; WT—19 pounds; E—O.S..108; P—Zinger 14x8.

Patty Generali and Paul Schuessler took 8th in Team Scale with this BVM F-86. Concentration is intense as Patty and Bob Violetti prepare the F-86 for flight. WT—13.5 pounds; E—BVM .81; P—Viojet fan.

Tom Czyl’s Jet Model Products F-4 Phantom was a real crowd-pleaser in the air. Because of an elevator pushrod failure, it didn’t survive the meet. WS—58 inches; WT—23 pounds; E—O.S..65; P—Dynamax fan.

Above & left: The Skyblazer F-86 returns to Top Gun. This time, Kent Hogeby built it. WT—13.5 pounds; E—BVM .91; P—Viojet fan.

Mark Frankel designed and scratch-built this ½-scale F-4D Skyray, which took the Best Jet award. Kerry Sterner piloted it well at Top Gun, considering that he hadn’t flown it before! Look for a construction article on this notable plane in a future issue. WS—58 inches; WT—21 pounds with tanks; E—O.S..91; P—Dynamax fan.
This beautiful AT-6, built by Rich Uravitch and flown by Nick Ziroli Jr., won 9th place in Team Scale. The plane carries Robert retract. No wonder there’s a growing interest in AT-6 racing: WS—101 inches; WT—23 pounds; E—Zenoah G-62; P—Zinger 22x10.

Mike Barbee, competing in Team Scale with Geoff Combs, stands with his 1/8-scale BT-13 during static judging. WS—92 inches; WT—18 pounds; E—ST 3,000s; P—Zinger 18x6.

This B-25 was campaigned by Nick Ziroli Sr. and Bill Sheffes. It took 4th place in Team Scale IV. It is constructed of balsa and lily leaves. Nick gets ready for flight competition. WS—101 inches; WT—35 pounds; E—Zenoah G-23c; P—Zinger 15x10s.

Dean Dip Berger and Bob Pickney took 1st place in Team Scale with this impressive C-45 Beechcraft built from modified Ziroli plans. The hinged nose cap swings open to reveal an aluminum control panel with radio on/off, retract air-pressure gauge, air jack, charge jack, beacon-light toggle and engine kill switch. WS—114 inches; WT—45 pounds; E—Zenoah G-38s, with scale functional exhaust; P—Zinger 20x6s.

The static judges closely examine Roger Young’s C-47, based on Ziroli plans, the 1/8-scale model represents an ECM aircraft used in Viet Nam. WS—144 inches; WT—49 pounds; E—Evelyn V-240c; P—Graupner 16x6 three-blade.

Gene Barton’s 1/8-scale AT-6 is based on Ziroli plans, and it has foam wings covered with 1/4-inch balsa and 2-ounce fiberglass. (See can of Bud in pilot’s hand.) WS—100 inches; WT—36 pounds; E—Sachs 4-2; P—Zinger 24x10.

This big blue 1/8-scale P-51B (B-25) was shown off by Tom Street and Tom Naser in Team Scale competition. WS—101 inches; WT—35 pounds; E—D.S. Surfass 1-20s with pumps; P—Graupner 12x7 three-blade props.

Richard Crapp from Great Britain prepares his majestic Antonov AN-2 for competition in a prep room at the Palm Beach Polo Club facility. The plane used a total of 17 servos and 6 channels to control lights, slats, cooling “gills” and flaps, in addition to standard controls. Unfortunately, the AN-2 met its end during the flying competition when transmitter batteries failed. WS—126 inches; WT—46 pounds; E—Zenoah G-62; P—Smart 24x8 scimitar.

Unfortunately, the AN-2 met its end during the flying competition when transmitter batteries failed. WS—126 inches; WT—46 pounds; E—Zenoah G-62; P—Smart 24x8 scimitar.
Team Scale with their C-45 Beechcraft (built from modified Ziroli plans).

**ON THE SCENE**

For those who haven’t visited Top Gun, the contest includes both static judging (Thursday and Friday) and flight judging (Saturday and Sunday). To ensure a lively, entertaining program, rounds of competition are punctuated by exhibition flights and demonstrations. Ample bleachers offer spectators a fantastic view of the action. Well-organized concession stands are nearby.

The meet isn’t just a daytime affair for competitors and their team members; cocktail parties and a Saturday night dinner/dance party are part of the agenda. If you can get your hands on one of the limited number of tickets for this function (tickets are sold by FTE), go for it. You’ll find that Frank Tiano knows how to bring down the house when given a microphone and a captive crowd of modelers. This year, he repeatedly sent the crowd into stitches.

**EXHIBITIONS**

The exhibition flights were an R/C aviation show in their own right. They included Jerry Candido’s Extra 300 and Ken Curly’s Sukhoi, both of which ably demonstrated the fine art of aerobatics. Don Maddiman and Tom Volasek, members of the famous Cloud Dancers F-15 precision flying team, put on an unforgettable performance with these large jets. Don also flew his “Flying Machine” in elements of aerial ballet with raw power. This demo showed the crowd just how fast, how high and—whether at altitude or close in—how gracefully a ducted fan can be expertly piloted.

Geoff Combs flew his “ultimate biplane”—a Proctor Nieupolo 28—as if it were a control-line stunt plane (no easy trick). Steve Buso flew his “Zap Machine” (a genuine control-line stunt aircraft) in an impressive, if dizzying, performance. Wayne Mann of Miniature Aircraft Supply sent a demo helicopter into an aerobic routine that stunned the crowd, and Rave’s Helicopter’s “Doc” also performed an exhibition helicopter flight.

Bubba Spivey, of Lanier R/C, and his partner Wayne Voyles put on a team aerobatic performance (

(Continued on page 83)

**TOP GUN WINNERS**

**EXPERT CLASS**

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<td>1. Charles Nelson</td>
<td>Waco VKS7F</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Mel Whitley</td>
<td>Sea Fury</td>
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<td>3. Diego Lopez</td>
<td>Skyraider</td>
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<td>4. Terry Nitsch</td>
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<td>5. Jeff Foley</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>500</td>
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<td>6. Corwin Miller</td>
<td>Globe Swift</td>
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<td>7. George Buso</td>
<td>Nieupolo 28</td>
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<td>8. Kent Nagy</td>
<td>F-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. David Hayes</td>
<td>Rockwell Thrush</td>
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<td>10. Bill Harris</td>
<td>F-55</td>
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**TEAM SCALE**

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<tr>
<td>1. Dean DiGiorgio</td>
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<td>2. Bob Violett/Jerry Caudle</td>
<td>F-16C</td>
<td>700</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Jim Maroney/Maury Maroney</td>
<td>P-51</td>
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<td>4. Nick Ziroli/S/Bill Steffes</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Richard Rawle/Peter Guider</td>
<td>Mosquito</td>
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**SPECIAL AWARDS**

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<tr>
<td>Craftsmanship</td>
<td>Jerry Caudle</td>
<td>F-16</td>
<td>MAN Trophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Roger Young</td>
<td>C-47</td>
<td>ACE Radio</td>
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<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Peter Guider</td>
<td>Mosquito</td>
<td>Robart Trophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Static</td>
<td>Charlie Nelson</td>
<td>Waco</td>
<td>MAN Trophy, $50, JR-347 radio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best Biplane</td>
<td>Richard Crapp</td>
<td>Antonov AN-2</td>
<td>RC Report Trophy, $200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best Glider</td>
<td>Corwin Miller</td>
<td>Globe Swift</td>
<td>Pacer Trophy, Sig kit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best Military</td>
<td>Bob Pickney</td>
<td>F-44 Beechcraft</td>
<td>FTE Trophy, Dave Platt Kit/Retracts</td>
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<td>Best Jet (tie)</td>
<td>Mark Frankel</td>
<td>F4D Skyraider</td>
<td>BVM gift certificate and trophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best Markings</td>
<td>Dave Matchions</td>
<td>T-33</td>
<td>BVM Gift certificate and trophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best Bums</td>
<td>Jerry Caudle</td>
<td>F-16C</td>
<td>Aerolift Cup</td>
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*Special Awarded to "Top Gun Huskies"

**FLIGHT JUDGES**

- Stan Alexander
- Bob Campbell
- Darlene Frederick
- Wayne Frederick
- Tom Kozel
- James Parker
- Jim Semonian
- John Smith

**CHIEF JUDGE**

- George Leu

**STATIC JUDGES**

- Bob Curry
- Jack Dorman
- Lee Henderson

**CHIEF JUDGE**

- Tim Farrell

**SCOREKEEPER**

- Jeff Troy

**SEPTMBER 1992**

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