

F2D News - April 2007

Mark Rudner
rudner@mit.edu

The 2007 US F2D season is now running ahead at full steam. This year we've got an exciting lineup in store, with what seems to be an unprecedented number of major contests planned (see the contest calendar on the MACA website <http://www.maca.hobby-site.com>).

When you take a look at that calendar, you may notice that one extremely important event is missing – the Team Trials. For reasons unknown to me, the organization of this cycle's Team Selection Program is running well behind the usual schedule. Rumor has it that bids have been placed to hold the Team Trials in Muncie during July, or in Lubbock over Labor Day weekend. Hopefully the vote will take place soon so that everyone can begin making the necessary arrangements.

This week I have just returned from the F2D Flying Frenzy in Jacksonville, Florida. This was the first ever F2D contest run by the brothers Duane, and I have to say that I was very impressed with their organization. The competition went off very smoothly, and without any major arguments or protests.

The site of this event was a large field on the fringes of Herlong Airport in west Jacksonville. The field was layed out with plenty of room for a sizable pit area, two official circles, and essentially unlimited space for test flying across the access road. On the downside, the naturally sandy Florida soil combined with a recent drought created a very dusty environment. After returning, I spent some time cleaning grass, sand, and grit out of my pitbox (note: a grit is something that southerners like to eat for breakfast, see "My Cousin Vinny" for further details). My engines are in need of some attention as well.

Contestants seemed unanimously impressed by the efforts of these first-time organizers. The only complaints that I heard during the contest were related to the sand/dust. Several competitors were worried that their engines would be ruined by the end of the contest as a result. This could to some extent be avoided by taking care to keep engines clean and to wash them out after any crashes. In the heat of battle this can't always be done, however, so undoubtedly some damage was done. I don't know if this could be helped by a local venue change, or a change to a time of year when the ground is likely to be less dusty, but if this problem can be addressed I think it will help to ensure that participation will grow in future years.

Throughout the contest, the quality of flying was very high. I saw a lot of great matches between a wide range of pilots in the field. Considering that this is still very early in the season, it bodes well for the F2D program in this country. In the end, Mike Willcox pulled out the victory for another 1st place notch on his wall. Lester Haury, recent winner of the Phoenix March Madness contest, took second place, and Alex Prokofiev took third place in his first F2D contest in the US since moving here. He started off very strong, with a string of wins that tapered off just a bit too soon to carry him to the end of this triple elimination tournament.

All in all, it was a very well run contest, and I'd like to thank everyone in Jacksonville who helped to make it possible. It was great to see such a good turnout (22 entries) for this inaugural event. I hope this is an indicator that interest in F2D is continuing to grow throughout the country.