

F2D News - July 2011

Mark Rudner
rudner@mit.edu

For many years, the US Nationals has been the sad outcast of American control line combat scene. What was once the shining star, the most coveted title of the season, became the lonely guy in the corner of the dance hall, looking at his shoes wondering how to get some attention. For years people have talked about this issue, lamenting the fact that the “big money” fast combat contests of the 80s and 90s apparently stole the spotlight from the NATS. However, despite wide agreement that the NATS should be revived, it remained on its last legs for many years... that is, until now.

This year, Chris Gay (of Chicago, for those who don't know him), took the reigns and ran the NATS on the platform of getting the NATS its groove back. Chris advertised, he publicized, he scrutinized, he went through every kind of 'ize' to get the NATS back on track. As far as I can tell, it worked.

Despite losing a battle with the AMA over concrete center circle pads (which would have been by far preferable to the concrete free flight winch mount conveniently located 52 feet from the center of the pilot's circle...), Chris was able to draw in a very strong field of 15 contenders in F2D, from all over the country. While 15 may not sound like a huge turnout, it was easily the biggest in years, and featured many of the country's top pilots. To add to the excitement, we flew triple elimination, which guaranteed two full days of great combat in weather about as perfect as a Muncie summer can offer.

There were many good matches over the two days of competition. If I may take a moment for self-congratulations, I was quite pleased with the performance of the New England Combat Team (myself, Greg Wornell of Wellesley, MA, and Alex Prokofiev of South Plainfield, NJ). Our loyal New England readership should be happy to know that you were well represented, as we claimed 1st (Alex), 3rd (me), and 4th (Greg) places. It was almost a perfect result for the team, though the indefatigable Richard Stubblefield managed to cut through and claimed 2nd place for Texas. Most notably, I think many in attendance were surprised and delighted by the awesome effort put in by Greg. He really stepped up the level of his flying this time, and put his mark on the national stage. It was the best I've seen him fly, and I was happy to see him maintain that level at the Wingbusters' Summer Sizzler this past weekend.

Speaking of the Summer Sizzler, there was lots of great flying all around. Neil Simpson went 4-0 to claim first place, while Brian Stas continued to impress with the higher level of precision that he has demonstrated throughout the last few contests. Watch out for him at the New England Cup next month!

Back to the NATS, one unfortunate aspect of the contest was the timing; rather than taking advantage of the July 4th 3-day weekend, combat kicked off with F2D on Monday, July 4th and Tuesday, July 5th (a working day). I'm sure this cut into the potential participation. If we can convince the AMA to move combat to the weekend, I bet we can get an even better turnout next time.

Finally, this month it is time for me to make a little announcement. Actually, it's a rather big announcement... After 8 awesome years as a New Englander, the time is quickly approaching when I will need to bid you all adieu. I have landed a job in Columbus, Ohio, and will be starting the first of the year. Earlier than that, however, I will be away on travel for three months, so my time here is really nearly up. Before signing off, I just want to thank everybody out here who has made my time in New England so great. It was a big change moving out here, over 2500 miles from my family, but I was instantly welcomed into the combat community. Since I ran out of time to keep up with Formula GX I haven't seen many of you (Dick, Jim, Joe, Lloyd, Will, ...) that often, but I certainly haven't forgotten. It's been a great time, and I hope I will get a chance to come back and see you all again in the future. If you have the time, come on down to the New England Cup for one last hurrah!