

F2D News - October 2011

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Many of you have noticed that the frequency of F2D News posts has been slowly dropping over the last year or so. For those who don't know, my time here in New England is now up; this week I will embark on a journey that will take me through Europe for 3 months, after which I will finally land in Columbus, Ohio where I will start the next phase of my life. Once I get settled I will try to start writing again, but it may be a while until you hear from me. Before going, however, I want to give one more huge thanks to the entire New England Combat Association for everything over the past 8 years.

Much has happened since the last time I wrote: since July, the European Championships, the New England Cup, the US Team Trials, and most recently the Eastern Massachusetts Championships have all taken place. This was the first time I was able to experience a European Championships, traveling to Czestochowa, Poland via Riga, Latvia to pitch in as a mechanic for Team Latvia. The European Championships was a competition of the highest caliber. The level of flying among the top contenders was extremely high. Under the direction of Boris Faisov, the Russian team seems to have elevated its game to impressive new heights. Be prepared for a new era of Russian professional dominance in the sport, akin to the Soviet dominance in the 1980s. The word on the street was that their team gathered for 10 days of solid practice before the competition; it showed. Hard work and dedication truly do pay off. Witnessing this high level of flying opened my eyes to the potential of how we could be flying, and motivated me to start training with renewed vigor and determination.

Just a week after the European Championships, we gathered again in Plymouth, MA for the second annual New England Cup. This time the event went international, with two Canadians (Pat Mackenzie and Yaroslav Melnikov) in attendance, in addition to domestic competitors from across the country. The field was beautiful as always, and I believe great fun was had by all. The holder of the New England Cup is Andrey Nadein of Philadelphia, PA. Second and third places went to Pat Mackenzie, and Yaroslav Melnikov, respectively. A huge thanks goes out to everyone who came out to help put on another 1st class event.

Next up was the Team Trials, hosted by the Strathmoor Model Club of Detroit, MI. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday were all extremely hot, with temperatures up to the mid-90s. Sunday was a bit more mild, but also brought a strong downpour midday that forced us to take a brief break from flying. Some technical issues about the rules were raised before and during the competition. The first regards the new rule about mechanics moving outside of the 22 meter pitting circle. The rule book states that mechanics shall only move around the circle while outside of the 22 meter line. However, no penalty is described for failing to do so. The common interpretation seems to be that a 40 point penalty should be given for running inside the 22 meter circle. This seems logical, but how strictly should it be enforced? In Detroit, a very strict interpretation was applied (mechanics must enter and exit the pitting circle radially; even a few steps in the circumferential direction inside the 22 meter line were considered an offense). The rule was applied consistently and fairly to all competitors, but led to a large number of penalties although there was never any danger of interfering with an opponent's pit. Is this the intent of the rule? Some clarification would be helpful. Also, the role of the yellow card came into light, as early as the pilots' meeting. How liberally should yellow cards be given? Compared with other contests such as the European Championships, it seemed like yellow cards were treated rather lightly here, given out much more freely. For example, at the pilots' meeting we were all warned not to fly with our free hands on our hips (elbow pointing out), as contact of the elbow with an opponent would be considered interference. This seemed rather harsh; under this interpretation, many of the world's top pilots would be heavily penalized for their natural flying style. These questions aside, three strong pilots found their way to the top. Our team in Bulgaria will consist of Allen Deveuve, Cary Minor, and Andrey Nadein. The first alternate is Josh Ellison, who turned around a disappointing performance in 2009 to an impressive display this year. He worked really hard preparing for the contest, and it clearly showed. It's great to see another young pilot with the combination of skill and determination coming up in the ranks. Keep an eye on Josh for the coming years!

Finally, this past weekend was the last event that I will get to fly in as a native New Englander (at least for now). We flew single airplane F2D at the luscious Wingbusters Field in Middleboro, MA. In addition to a great day of flying, this contest gave us a chance to test a prototype (alpha) version of Alex Prokofiev's new contest management software. The software provides a quick and convenient interface for pilot registration (linked to a

self-growing database of pilots' ID information), automatically performs a random draw for all rounds through the competition, taking care to avoid repeat matches (and to separate pilots by teams if desired), tabulates scores, and keeps track of all results in a convenient table. The program is still in development, but the basic nuts and bolts were in place and it performed beautifully. The biggest benefit is that the automatic draw function saves a lot of time and energy, while the other features also help to grease the wheels of contest administration. Finally we have arrived in the 21st century! As for the contest itself, we had 5 entries (Paul Kubek, me, Neil Simpson, Brian Stas, and Greg Wornell). The level of flying all around was pretty good, especially considering the stiff wind and difficult double-layer puffy cloud conditions. In the third round I had a very exciting match with Neil Simpson that went full bore for the entire 4 minute period. It was a memorable, hard-fought match, befitting of my final contest here. In the end, the results were: 1st Mark Rudner (5-1), 2nd Greg Wornell (3-2), 3rd Neil Simpson (1-2). Thanks guys for a great send-off. It was truly a pleasure to have one last chance to fly with you. Looking forward to seeing you all again in the future!

This is Mark Rudner, signing off...