

F2D News - September 2012

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Hi. It's me again. I've been hoping to find the time to write for quite a while, but somehow kept getting distracted by other things. The biggest news on my side is that I've moved to Denmark, at least for a while. I'm looking forward to some cool new flying opportunities while I'm over here.

Lots has happened since my last column. In July we had that NATS, and then in August we had the World Cup and World Championship events in Bulgaria. Unfortunately I won't be able to give the detailed reports on these contests that I'd hoped to. However, I can say that it was a great summer of F2D.

First, the NATS. A big thanks goes out to Chris Gay for again devoting a huge amount of time and energy to promote and to run the NATS. With 24 pilots (as I recall), it was the best turnout in decades. The heat was brutal, as is not uncommon for Muncie in the summer. Luckily we managed to finish just as a massive thunderhead began to spread over the field. As it turned out, this weather was good preparation for what was to come in Bulgaria. The finals pitted Alexander Prokofievs, the returning champion from New Jersey, against Andrey Nadein from Pennsylvania. After a great contest for Andrey, suddenly his swing-arm shutoffs let him down in a bad way with a series of false-firings that prevented him from staying in the air. It was an anticlimactic final, which saw Alex emerge as the repeat national F2D champion.

On to Bulgaria. As a nice bonus, the organizers of this year's world championships held a world cup competition on the two days preceding the beginning of the world champs. Initially they limited the entries to 50 pilots, but after overwhelming demand reopened registration for up to 100 pilots. Pre-registration numbers soared to around 80, but after arriving to find oppressive heat (hovering around 100 degrees Fahrenheit) several pilots got scared and decided to stay home and hang out in their hotels' swimming pools. The final entry tally was somewhere in the mid 60s, still a very good-sized contest.

The World Cup was held at a soccer field outside of town, which was originally held as a back-up site for the world champs. Although there was no natural shade around, the field was in great condition. The conditions got even better once the port-a-potties finally arrived. In order to finish within 2 days, the officials ran two circles simultaneously. When I first heard this I expected total chaos, but actually it worked surprisingly well (apparently it's been standard at the big contests in Russia for many years). The big break-out surprise of the contest came from Odeta Rastenyte, the 14 year old daughter of long-time top contender Audrius Rastenis. Odeta has been flying for two years, and has developed a flying style based on "inside-eights" that proved very tough for others to crack. She put together a string of 9 wins in a row (brushing aside a few members of Team USA along the way), bringing her straight to the finals. Audrius was looking particularly strong, himself, and got himself to the finals as well after a win over Igor Dementiev. By that time the hour was already growing late (and airplane supply perhaps getting low), and so Odeta generously conceded the finals to her father, which put him at the top of the World Cup standings for the year.

Finally, the main event. The organizers of the World Champs managed to secure funding to develop a brand new control line site, within walking distance of the town center. The good news was that the combat circle was just adjacent to the two stunt circles and the racing circle. This close proximity opened the possibility of spectators easily walking back and forth to catch combat as well as the other events. On the down side, the combat circle was very close to some tall trees on one side, and a big ditch on the other side. The trees contributed to very low visibility on one side of the circle, and to some strange wind-related effects. The grass that the organizers had planted was growing in nicely, but unfortunately still left a lot of dusty soil exposed (in particular throughout the line check/pit area).

In contrast to last year's European Championships, where the Russian team stood out as a truly dominating force, this year there was no one pilot who looked head and shoulders above the rest. Despite two long days of combat under intense heat at the World Cup, Audrius Rastenis was still in top form. He must have been feeling particularly strong, as I never even saw him land early when he had a match won. Igor Dementiev also looked very strong. Perhaps those who stayed home in their swimming pools instead of flying in the World Cup had the wrong strategy.

For some reason, this year's champs was marred by a continuous stream of controversy. I couldn't figure out why it was so much worse than in other years, but every single round was followed by a string of protests, that took hours to resolve. This really slowed down the pace of the competition, and led to a twilight finish that came dangerously close to not taking place at all. Another interesting fact was that, although the wind was very strong during the first few rounds, the number of flyaways seemed to increase dramatically after the air became calm. I don't have an accurate count, but would guess that there were at least 8-10 flyaways. In several cases, these flyaways led to DQs due to shutoff failure (as sadly happened to Andrey Nadein in the second round). Fortunately, Andrew's model was returned and his engine came out unscathed. Igor Trifonov also lost due to a flyaway, but in his case the engine hit the pavement and suffered irreparable damage. Trifonov's son also experienced several flyaways, but fortunately for him his shutoff worked very quickly each time. The first time, his plane glided right into one of the tall trees at the edge of the circle. Since the streamer couldn't be retrieved, a re-fly was granted. In the re-fly, both of his planes ended up getting cut loose. They must've encountered a bad batch of lines.

In the end it came down to Igor Dementiev and Audrius Rastenis (a familiar scenario). To get to the final, Igor beat Trifonov, ending his bid for a 4th title. Under near-dark conditions, the final didn't go as well for Igor, and Audrius emerged as the World Champion. A big congratulations goes out to Audrius for a hard-fought and well-deserved title.

That's all I've got for now. Keep flying and stay cool!