

The Reno National Championship Air Races

43rd Annual Running, Sept. 13-17, 2006

By Al Hansen

The sound of air racing returned to the Stead Field for the 43rd edition of the Reno National Championship Air Races and Air Show. Air Race fans from every point of the compass came to watch and enjoy the six classes of racing aircraft: Biplane, Formula One, Sport, T-6, Jet and Unlimited.

Entertainment between the races was provided by the U.S. Air Force *Thunderbirds* and several air show performers including Kent Pietch, Mike Goulin and David Martin.

A new name was added to the list of Unlimited Gold winners. Michael Brown raced his modified Hawker *Sea Fury* around the 8.5 mile Unlimited course at 481.6 mph. Matt Jackson in a Hawker *Sea Fury* named "Dreadnought" with a P&W R-4360 engine finished second with a speed of 453.6 mph. This year's Unlimited Gold race was dominated by Hawker *Sea Furies* with a lone Yak-11 splitting the field with a third place finish. No American-made aircraft qualified for the Unlimited Gold race, but were still well represented in this class.

Bob Odegaard brought his beautiful Goodyear F2G *Corsair* to Reno. It is the only flyable F2G in the world and added to the fine show. And a beautifully restored P-51A *Mustang* flown by Dave Morss turned in a respectable performance of 344.2 mph to win the Unlimited Bronze race.

The Sport Class is coming on strong. This class, created in 1998, highlights new and innovative developments of high performance kit-built aircraft. Entries must be of production model kit-built aircraft of which five or more kits have been delivered to customers. These aircraft must be powered by a reciprocating engine of less than 650 cu. in. displacement. All entrants must have a current FAA airworthiness certificate. As competition heats up in this class, innovations are pushing the speeds up to that approaching the Unlimited. Since its inception, the winning aircraft performance has increased from 308 mph to over 360 mph – fast enough to have won the Unlimited Class Bronze race. This year's Sport Class Gold race winner was awarded to Jon Sharp in a Nemesis NXT with a speed of



The new Unlimited Gold Race Champion Michael Brown and his Hawker Sea Fury "September Fury." The Unlimited racers "Rare Bear," "Dago Red" and "Strega" were all forced out of the race by engine problems. (All photos by the author)



Left: The Unlimited Silver race was won by Dan Vance in a Hawker Sea Fury, "September Pops." His official speed was 405.759 mph.



Right: The Unlimited Bronze race was won by Dave Morss in this North American P-51A "Polar Bear." His official speed was 344.211 mph.



Left: Jon Sharp won the Sport Class in "Nemesis" when the first place finisher Rod Von Grote in Race 33 cut a pylon.

Right: Nick Macy won the T-6 Gold Race in Race 6, "Six Cat" at 235.609 mph.



Left: Gary Hubler won the Formula One Gold Race in Race 95 "Mariah" at 257.047 mph.

Right: The Biplane Class Race was won by Tom Aberle in Race 62 "Phantom" with a speed of 251.958 mph.



360.4 mph. After Rod Von Grote in a Lancair Legacy cut a pylon incurring a time penalty that moved him to second place.

The Air Force and U.S. Navy provided static displays of their aircraft along with the vintage aircraft competing in the National Aviation Heritage Invitational Competition (NAHIC). The National Aviation Heritage Invitational was established by Rolls-Royce North America in 1998 in cooperation with the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, Reno Air Racing Association and the National Aviation Hall of Fame. The objective of the National Aviation Heritage Invitational is to encourage the preservation of aviation history through the restoration of vintage aircraft to original flying condition.

Aircraft owners and restorers competed for the prestigious Rolls-Royce Aviation Heritage Trophy. The trophy resides in the Steven F. Udvar Hazy Center of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in the Washington D.C. area. The People's Choice Award, presented by the National Aviation Hall of Fame, is awarded to the aircraft that receives the most votes by the general public attending the Invitational. Additional trophies being awarded are the "Orville and Wilbur Wright Trophy" (civilian aircraft built and flown in 1935 or earlier), the Paul E. Garber Trophy (civilian aircraft built and flown in 1936 or later) and the Henry "Hap" Arnold Trophy (any military aircraft regardless of military use).

Each aircraft was judged on its technical merit and how

well it represented the condition of the aircraft early in its career. The competition is open to aircraft 45 years old or older which have been restored to its present condition. The aircraft participating in the NAHIC was judged by a five-member team that includes representatives from the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum's restoration team at the Paul Garber facility.

The 2006 winner of the Rolls-Royce Aviation Heritage Trophy is Frank Schelling of Pleasant Hill, Calif., and his 1918 Curtiss JN-4H "Jenny" WWI trainer. Frank Schelling has invested 31 years to restore this aircraft and engine. This aircraft also won the People's Choice Award.

The winner of the 2006 Paul E. Garber Trophy is a 1939 Lockheed 12A *Electra Jr.* owned by Les Whittlesey of Coto de Caza, Calif.

The 2006 winner of the Orville and Wilbur Wright Trophy is a 1932 Waco QDC owned by Alan Buchner of Fresno, Calif.

The winner of the 2006 "Henry "Hap" Arnold Trophy" is a 1942 Curtiss P-40K owned by Ron Fagen of Granite Falls, Minn., and restored by Warhawks, Inc. of Granite Falls.

Race week in Reno was a tour de force of professionalism top to bottom, no serious accidents, and an unforgettable gathering of enthusiasts, friends and remarkable airplanes; by any measure, time well spent

Race Results

Sport Gold	Distance: 39.64 miles				
Pilot	Aircraft	Type	Time	Speed (mph)	Place
Sharp, Jon	Nemesis - Race 3x	Nemesis NXT	6:36.300	360.389	1
Von Grote, Rod	Race 33	Lancair Legacy	6:38.325	358.557	2
Parker, John	Blue Thunder - Race 351	Thunder Mustang	6:47.666	350.340	3
Farnsworth, Lynn	Miss Karen II - Race 44	Lancair Legacy	7:03.309	337.395	4
Wright, Dan	Wright Flyer 101 - Race 7	Nemesis NXT	7:14.492	328.710	5
Behel, Lee	Race 5	Lancair Legacy	7:33.316	315.060	6
Eldredge, Kevin	Last Minute - Race 42	Glasair III	7:35.575	313.499	7
Dacey, Michael	Race 71	Questair Venture	6:39.666	299.986	8
Notes:	Speed computed on 5 laps completed.				

Formula One Gold Distance: 25.50 miles

Hubler, Gary	Mariah - Race 95	Cassutt III M	5:57.134	257.047	1
Hoover, David	Endeavor - Race 11	Arnold AR-6	6:00.584	254.587	2
Greer, Charlie	Miss B Haven - Race 69	Gilbert DG-1	6:11.125	247.356	3
Crandlemire, Scotty	Outrageous - Race 12	Cassutt III M	6:23.500	239.374	4
Debs, Ray	Carbon Slipper - Race 81	Debbs-Weinman	6:37.284	231.069	5
Maslen, Holbrook	Judy - Race 44	Shoestring	6:37.425	230.987	6
Somes, Jason	Alley Cat - Race 4	Owl OR71	6:37.484	230.953	7
Bodine, Doug	Yellow Peril - Race 92	Cassutt		0.000	8

Biplane Gold Distance: 19.06 miles

Aberle, Tom	Phantom - Race 62	Mong Sport	4:32.283	251.958	1
Lo, Jeffrey	Miss Gianna - Race 13	Pitts LR-1	4:56.108	231.685	2
Brown, Stephen	Tonopah Low II - Race 00	Pitts S-1	5:23.242	212.237	3
Thibodeau, J.P.	Son of Galloping Goat - Race 21	Pitts S-1S	5:02.167	189.200	4
Smith, James	Humm Baby - Race 50	Pitts S-1C	5:14.792	181.612	5
Jerant, Frank	Mongstrosity - Race 16	Mong-Jerant Racer	5:20.175	178.558	6
Watkins, Jeff	Devil in Da Skies - Race 17	Pitts S-1S	5:29.025	173.755	7
Murphy, Kirk	Lady Luck - Race 7X	Pitts S-1S	5:29.150	173.689	8

T-6 Gold Distance: 25.32 miles

Macy, Nick	Six Cat - Race 6	AT-6G	7:44.309	235.609	1
Buehn, Dennis	Midnight Miss III - Race 43	T-6D	7:57.500	229.100	2
McNeely, Gene	Undecided II - Race 90	AT-6C	8:10.725	222.926	3
Zayac, John	McDonald Racer - Race 37	SNJ-5	8:14.867	221.060	4
Sanders, Joey	Big Red - Race 5	AT-6C	8:20.267	218.674	5
Good, James	Wildcatter - Race 77	SNJ-5	8:20.467	218.587	6
Siegfried, Richard	Hot Off The Press - Race 21	AT-6	8:26.817	215.848	7

Unlimited Gold Distance: 67.289 miles

Michael Brown	September Fury- Race 232	Hawker Sea Fury	481.619	1
Matt Jackson	Dreadnought - Race 8	Hawker Sea Fury	453.559	2
Sherm Smoot	Czech Mate- Race 86	Yak 11	445.817	3
Robert Gibson	Riff Raff - Race 99	Hawker Sea Fury	437.883	4
Stewart Dawson	Spirit of Texas - Race 105	Hawker Sea Fury	428.753	5
Nelson Ezell	Fury - Race 13	Hawker Sea Fury	409.868	6
Bill Rheinschild	Bad Attitude - Race 119	Hawker Sea Fury	408.200	7