



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of QUIQUE SOMENZINI

Started modeling in 1976  
AMA #555160



Written by QS (12/2003), EH (05/2008) and JG (05/2012), edited by JF (12/2003) and JS (08/2007), Transcribed by JS (08/2007, 10/2011) and KE (05/2012); Reformatted by JS (02/2010), Updated by JS (12/2010, 10/2011, 05/2012)

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## Career:

- Established Aero Club Rio Cuarto in Argentina
- 1990-2002: Worked as consultant and promoter for Futaba Corporation
- 1999-2003: Worked for PLProd France as consultant and airplane designer
- 2000-2002: Worked as consultant for OS Engines
- 1992-present: Worked for 3W Modellmotoren as consultant
- 1990-2000: Worked as consultant for YS Engines
- 2002-present: Works for YS Performance
- 1979, 1985-2003: Avid competitor in F3A Championships
- Currently consultant and promoter for Horizon Hobby, JR Radio to 2001
- Competed and placed in championships in Argentina, Australia, South Africa, and the U.S.A.
- Currently involved in modeling kits for various companies, including his own new company, Quique's Aircraft Company

## Honors:

- 1977: Won 3<sup>rd</sup> Place in F3A Argentina National Championships as a 10-year old
- Won Argentina F3A National Championships 21 times
- 1989, 1990: Won Australian F3A Nationals
- 2001, 2002: Won two U.S. Nationals in F3A
- 1979: Won F3A Nationals in South Africa, set world record as youngest pilot to compete at F3A World Championships at age 12
- 1990: Won first place in Free-style Tournament of Champions (TOC)
- 1994-1995, 1997-1999: TOC champion
- 1988: Won Ego Etrich Cup in Austria
- 2001: Won first International Artistic Aerobatic contest at Romilly, France
- 2001-2003: Second place in F3A World Championships. Also second in 1991

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*The following was written and submitted by Quique Somenzini to the AMA History Project (at the time called the AMA History Program) in 2003.*

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Quique Somenzini is a remarkably accomplished modeler and flyer, considering his age at this date. He began the hobby at age nine in 1976. His father was a modeler who taught his son how to fly. Quique's father was the Argentine National Champion for F3A.

In 1976 and for 9 years after, Quique was a member of Aero Club de Rio Cuarto in the province of Cordoba, Argentina. At age 14, Quique designed his first model, a *Toorito*. He built the model

from scratch based on his father's plans. His father helped him to construct this first model. Quique recalls having a tough time creating the wings, using foam core. He remembers creating hand-launched models as a youngster, so using balsa to create parts like the fuselage came much easier.

Quique's first championship was the F3A Argentina Nationals in 1977. He used the Toorito model and received 3<sup>rd</sup>. Quique has competed in a national competition every year since. He won the Argentine Nationals 21 times, and is now competing in the U.S.A., where he hopes to win more. He competed in the Australian Nationals winning in F3A in 1989 and 1990. He also competed in FAI competition, winning for Argentina before coming to the U.S.

Quique still holds the record for youngest participant in the F3A World Championships in South Africa, at the tender age of 12. He also competed in the International Tournament of Champions, in competition every time from 1990 to 2002. In 1990, he took first place in Free-style, and was TOC champion in 1994, 1995, and 1997-1998. He took second in 1996, and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 2002 TOC.

Quique won the first International Aerobatic Contest at Romilly, France in 2001. He also won the Ego Etrich Cup in Austria in 1988 and won second place twice at Tournoi du Champaign, France. He was 10-time South American champion, Free-style world champion in 2003, and Don Lowe champion in 2003. He took second place in 2001 and 2003 at the F3A World Championships.

With regards to experimentation, Quique designed different models with his father. They include the following airplanes and the places they have competed:

- *Picis* at World Championships in Netherlands, 1985
- *David* at U.S. Nationals in Lake Charles, Louisiana, 1986
- *Desafio* at World Championships of France, 1987
- *Desafio 4T* at U.S. Championships, 1989
- *Desafio II* at World Championships in Australia, 1991. The airplane later won second at that competition
- *Desafio S* at World Championships in Austria, 1993 and produced later by Bolly. The airplane later won at that competition
- *Tango S* at World Championships in Japan, 1995. The airplane placed 8<sup>th</sup>
- *Desafio 2000* at World Championships in Poland, 1997. Also produced later by Bolly. It placed 12<sup>th</sup> at Polish competition
- *Extra 300L*, produced by Aeroworks, TOC winner in 1998

Quique's own personal designs include:

- *Freedom 2000*, kitted by Aeroworks
- *3D Dancer*, kitted by MK of Japan
- *Excellence IAM*, kitted by PLProd of France
- *Flashdance*, also kitted by PLProd, won the first international aerobatic competition in France in 2001
- *Fiesta*, produced in 2001 by PLProd
- *Smaragd Z*, produced in 2001 and taking first place at U.S. Nationals in 2001 and 2002. Placed second in Ireland in 2001. The airplane is produced by PLProd
- *Partner*, produced by PLProd. The airplane took second place at 2003 F3A World Championships

- *YAK 54*, produced by Quique's Aircraft Company. The airplane took third place at 2002 TOC and captured Free-style world championship in 2003 and Don Lowe Master in 2003 in South Carolina
- *LeaderZ*, kitted in Japan by MK, 2003

Quique's other honors and accomplishments include an honor by the City Library of Rio Cuarto as a distinguished citizen of the town. In 1994, he was honored by that city as Sportsman of the Year. In 1996, he was named distinguished citizen of the city of Merlo. In 1997, the province of San Luis honored him as Sportsman of the Year.

In 2002, the Asociacion de Aeromodelismo of Costa Rica distinguished Quique as the person who had the greatest effect on modeling in Latin America.

Publications include a monthly column for a Japanese Radio Control magazine from 1992 to 1999. The column involved Free-style technique. He also wrote for the Brazilian magazine *Modelismo em Noticias* writing a bi-monthly column called Free-style Aerobatic from 1996 to 2000. He also wrote 14 articles for a Spanish Radio Control magazine on Free-style Aerobatic. He also wrote for a French Radio Control magazine, contributing 10 articles, also on Free-style Aerobatic. Currently, he is writing for *Model Airplane News* in the United States.

Quique's new company, Quique's Aircraft Co. of Springfield, Ohio produces model airplane kits on the ARF version. Quique has worked for numerous other companies, including promotion and consultation for Futaba Corporation from 1990 to 2002. He worked for YS Engines as a consultant from 1990 to 2000 and OS Engines as a consultant from 2000 to 2002. Since 2002, he has been working for Horizon Hobby of Champaign, Illinois in the JR radio division as a promoter and consultant. He also works for 3W Modellmotoren of Germany as a consultant. He worked for PLProd of France as consultant and designer from 1999 to 2003.

Quique was also involved in going around to the schools as a teenager and giving different demonstrations. A local paper once did an interview and published the article with a plan of his hand-launched airplane that he called *Flecha 1* (*Arrow 1* in English) in the early 1980s.

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*The following was written by Brian Clemmons, published in the May 2008 issue of Model Aviation magazine.*

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### **Interview with a World Champion**

#### **A world-class pilot uses teamwork, training, and airplane design to bring back the Gold**

*Model Aviation*, December 1987, Volume 13, Number 12; Ron Chidgey reported from Avignon, France about the 15<sup>th</sup> F3A World Championships.

Team USA was Tony Frackowiac; Chip Hyde, who was on the team for the first time; Steve Helms, aka "Mr. Futaba" (who you can see on page 119 of the January 2008 *MA*, flying a helicopter with a Futaba spread spectrum radio); and Dave Brown, AMA's president from 1996 to 2007, as manager. Among others, Dean Pappas, MA's "If It Flies..." columnist – attended.

The US team flew to a fourth-place finish that year. Hanno Prettnner won the individual title with an early JR PCM radio.

In the article, Ron included a picture of 24<sup>th</sup>-place Quique Somenzini. The caption read, "...Watch this talented flier. Chidgey predicts he will place much higher in future championships..."

Ron, you were right! In November 2007, the US F3A team competed in the World Championships held in Santa Fe, Argentina. The team brought home the Silver Medal for a second-place finish and the individual Gold Medal for Quique Somenzini.

The US team consisted of Quique, Jason Shulman, and Andrew Jesky. Jason has been a member of the past five teams, two of which have won and three of which have finished in second place. He has quite a collection of Medals!

This was young Andrew Jesky's first time to represent the US, and he did so respectably. Many of us have been watching him closely and with much enthusiasm.

Last year was the first year Quique was eligible to represent the US, although he, as has Jason, has won the AMA Pattern Nats three times. Natural-born citizens shouldn't feel bad, though; Quique has won Pattern Nationals in four other countries as well!

I interviewed Quique about his F3A World Championships win, looking to answer a few questions that might be of interest to competitive pilots. His comments might also present sport fliers with some insights so they can improve their flying. One thing I will ask Quique about is the fact that he won this contest using a spread spectrum-technology radio.

F2A, or RC Aerobatics, is commonly called Pattern. *MA* features a bimonthly column that covers this discipline, written by Eric Henderson, which is all about exhibiting control over the model.

Rules limit each airplane to a 2-meter wingspan and length, as well as an 11-pound weight. Some pilots fly their aircraft with motors, but most fly with glow engines. Snaps, Spins, Rolls and Loops are components of a list of maneuvers that each pilot flies in competition. A panel of judges from around the world watches to declare who does it all the best at a World Championships.

Quique is a humble and engaging modeler. He was extremely gracious in agreeing to do this interview. I presented the following questions to him via E-mail.

**BC:** *First of all, let me offer you my personal congratulations on your winning the individual F3A World Championships. Well done!*

*The most remarkable thing in capturing the championship was the fact that you did it without winning a single round, which is something that has never been done before. Can you tell us about the consistently high level of competitiveness this required?*

**QS:** Thank you very much. I am very happy to reach a life goal. F3A is my passion and the foundation of my flying. I do not know if it was the most remarkable thing but for sure it was a unique way to win. I could be more remarkable to win every round! Flying in Argentina was superlative by all finalists and without a question consistency was the key to reaching the top.

To be honest with you I never thought a world championships could be won without winning a single round, but I knew the only way to do it was by being steady and scoring consistently high. Fantastic flyers like my teammate Jason Shulman, Frenchman Christophe Paysant-Le Roux or Japanese pilot Tetsuo Onda all won a round but I was very close to the 1000 points in some rounds and the important rounds like the final's rounds. That was the key to get this result.

The bottom line was to reach what I sought for so many years and, on top of that, I got something unique making me smile even more!

*BC: What was it like, for you personally, winning in Argentina?*

**QS:** It was a dream that came true. This was my first time on the USA team and I am very happy and honored how we all worked together, united with a common target. Without a question this environment did help each of us to perform at our best.

Personally, I felt extraordinary support from my teammates. We had great practice together before the contest, a true team practice. All this teamwork was reflected later on during the contest not only as a team performance, it was also individually. As I said, I felt strong support from my team and feel they were true supporters of my individual win. To all of them go my very special thanks.

As a team result we were very close to winning, we were first after raw scores, and 8 points back in second place after TBL; a very good result and without a question we will be a contender for first place in 2009!

As you know Argentina is my home country. Going back, competing and winning was a very special feeling as well. I must thank all of my Argentinian friends for the extraordinary support they gave me during the contest, it was magic and special.

I was very proud to represent USA and to bring back home a trophy with so much meaning and prestige. I would like every American modeler to feel part of this championship; I feel that way and thank you all for your tremendous support. Thank you!

*BC: Tell us about the biplane; how does it compare to the monoplanes you've flown in the past? Is it something you would recommend to the average Pattern competitor?*

**QS:** The Euphoria was designed for me and manufactured by Oxai models. Wayne Ulery did help me making the nose plug and detailing my drawings. I truly believe a proper designed biplane has advantages over the monoplanes. My years of experience flying mono and biplanes tell me that.

It took me a while to come out with the proper biplane, and the Euphoria is close to what I've always been looking for. Always there is room to improve the design, but the Euphoria's concept is what I really like. A winner concept.

Biplanes are known for great, unique, attractive presentations and at the same time are known for being a challenge to set up. I will say both of these things are correct. But you see another strong point of the biplane; the definition of each maneuver is more clear. A snap, a spin, etc. is very well defined and free of questions. That to me is very important.

Biplanes are very powerful on yaw giving another great advantage over the monoplanes. Rolling maneuvers, points, circles, loops, Ss are easier to do and they look cleaner and more natural to the airplane.

My Euphoria biplane is the first biplane to ever win a precision aerobatic world championship. Looking at the concept I was speaking of before, the Euphoria is very different from all of the biplanes that have been tried in the past.

Short and thin wings to get the proper top airspeed are an important thing to have under strong and gusty winds. No flying wires for the same reason. Wing TE swept forward. Smaller wing area in order to reach the stalling speed at an airspeed similar to a monoplane, and to get the overall lock in feeling. Proper location of wings and stab. Right distribution of the areas, etc. to reach minimum or zero coupling.

In general biplanes are known for carrying large couplings and requiring big mixing. This is a scary thing that makes many pilots choose not to fly them.

All of these points mentioned are important to get an airplane that will do things right, making the pilot work less. The result of that is more consistent flying, something that in my case paid off so well.

Finally, I will say biplanes are better wind fliers. That is another reason I chose a biplane to fly in Argentina, an area where I was born and flew for a long time. I know some might not share my thoughts, but I feel that if the biplane is properly designed, it can do better with the wind.

The aspect ratio of my biplane is very low and the center of lift is closer to the fuselage's axis, making the wing rock less under gusty air. Also on vertical up or down lines, the wings hide each other making the total wing area exposed to the wind to be less. The consequence of this is that the wind will drift the airplane less.

In my way of looking at the debate of biplane vs. monoplane, it is very clear, especially for the F-09 and F-11 schedules. That is how we design pattern ships; looking at the aerobatic schedule and individual maneuvers to fly.

I will say biplanes are hard to beat and they have a very attractive look. Some of the points exposed before can be accomplished with a monoplane design using winglet, SFG, and a very tall fuse for best yaw authority; but they will still present, look and perform as monoplanes.

*BC: How about the gear you used in the biplane; which servos did you use for each control, what motor did you use, how were they mounted? What can you add to the great debate of electric versus glow?*

**QS:** I flew the Euphoria with the new JR 12X 2.4 GHz DSM2 and I am truly happy with the radio. It has a simply amazing response, is easy to program and has a great feel. I had the only JR 12X with the DSM2 system, along with another Brazilian pilot that flew a JR 10X with a Spektrum module.

I used all JR servos; 3421sa x four for ailerons, 9411sa for elevator, 8611a for rudder and 368 for throttle. I used a Spektrum 9000 receiver. My engine was the YS 170 with YS mount and an Asano exhaust system. The propeller was a 4 Blade prop made by Wayne Ulery, a highly modified APC 16.2 x 13.

The official weight of my primary plane was 4,880 grams. The fuel I used was Cool Power 30% LS. I also used a Tru-Turn spinner, FAI 3-3/8 inch. The Euphoria is manufactured by Oxai models.

I flew electrics in 2005 and 2006 and won those US Nats with that set up when I flew my Brios. Later, my decision to go back to glow was based on two things: one, the biplane project. The other was the chance of high wind for the contest (which actually happened!)

I felt and feel the best combination for existing and future rules is a glow biplane. This combination balances best and covers greater variations of weather conditions. The power plant to choose, being electric or glow, should be taken based upon the airplane design chosen to fly.

The other side of my personal decision to fly a glow engine is about the greater airspeed range of the motor. This allows better throttling control along with the great sound of a four-stroke engine.

The progress of the electrics has been noticeable, especially with the newest battery technology. I truly believe an electric has an equal chance to win. But, as I said before, you have to match the design with the power plant to fly.

Finally another aspect of my personal decision is the excitement that the sound and operation of the YS gives me. I get more excited being around a glow engine and I feel more connected to my flying!

*[I've been watching the new spread spectrum radios in the pages of MA. Imagine no more frequency pins, no more getting shot down, and no more radio impounds!]*

*Several years ago my radio was accidentally dropped in the Nats impound and refused to turn on when the starter gave me permission to do so. I have 20 minutes to effect repairs or scratch the flight. (The repair was successful!) I was in second place after that round, but this would not have happened in a spread spectrum world. No impound would have been necessary.*

*Even so, Pattern pilots demand the utmost out of their aircraft and radios, and I have been suspicious of the new radios. Quique has definitively addressed my suspicions; this technology works!*

*Competitive and sport pilots alike can gain confidence with the newer radios with Quique's win in Argentina. He flew the best he could find, and he chose spread spectrum. Guess what my next radio will be!]*

**BC:** *This was the first year you were eligible to fly for the United States; how do you see the level of competition in the United States compared to that in other countries? Are there any younger pilots here who excite you with their potential?*

**QS:** United States has a very good level. The competition here in US is top class. The US Nats, our premier contest, is very similar to the level of competition that we see at a World Championships. The quality of flying during Nats final and semi-finals, for example, is very close to what we see during a WC.

I will say that the USA, Japan and France are the 3 countries with highest level of National competition. In the US, we have probably a larger number of top world type pilots.

This is my first time representing USA and was an enormous experience for me and very different. I felt part of a real team and a very strong team.

I enjoyed the contest but I equally enjoyed the practice. Every day we practiced together before the WC, which was truly most exciting for me and was an incredible opportunity to learn and improve my flying. You know when I practice at home, most of the time I do it with Wayne or by myself. In Argentina practicing, I had the whole team looking as we did with Jason or Andrew flying. To me it was one of the nicest challenges I went through.

I truly believe that if our team in the future works united and with the same goals, we could have a team that can set the standards of world F3A competition. Young fliers are already showing incredible talent and achievement.

One of them is Andrew Jesky, who did a remarkable job and probably is one of the best world F3A pilots. Brett Wickiser is another young and very talented pilot who also showed us his talent at the last Nats.

*[In MA's coverage of the 2005 World Championships, I mentioned Andrew and Brett as pilots to watch.]*

I am excited to see young fliers like them and I think we all should be, as they are our future. From my end, I will keep supporting the younger pilots as much as I can. I will go back to the World Championships in Portugal in 2009 as an individual competitor to give the opportunity for the 4th person from the US to be part of the US team, and will continue flying and competing in F3A as long I feel I am still enjoying it.

**BC:** *The F3A World Championships is, in essence, the top honor conferred on any powered, fixed-wing-aircraft, RC pilot in the world. Bearing in mind your involvement with many other disciplines of RC, such as IMAC [International Miniature Aerobatic Club] and E-flight, what is your personal favorite type of model aircraft? What do you fly for fun? Does your son fly yet?*

**QS:** My passion is precision aerobatics. No matter what airplane type I fly I like to fly aerobatics. But I like aerobatic with control, showing control. To me that has a direct relationship with precision. Precision is the foundation of all type of aerobatics. No matter it if is 3D, F3A, IMAC, or E Flight, all have the same kind of feeling and foundation. F3A in my opinion is the most pure expression of precision, finesse and style.

My son does not fly yet but if he likes and if he chooses to fly pattern I will be a happy Dad!



*BC: Quique, you are now the undisputed top precision aerobatics pilot in the world. What can you tell us about your practice schedule in the year leading up to the World Championships in Argentina?*

**QS:** 2007 was an intensive F3A year and more than what has been for the last 5 or 6 years. I got my new Euphoria flying early '07, learned the airplane and the best set up. Later we had the Nats/Team Trials. After that the WC.

My preparation mainly was working on the airplanes. I took 3 airplanes to Argentina so I spent a great amount of time trying to get all airplanes flying as similar as was possible. Wayne and I spent many hours together working on props. We learned at the Nationals a few things and we used that experience to get better tuned up for the WC.

We had 3 months after the Nationals to prepare for the WC, and I took a break with my flying and worked at the shop. I finished my #4 Euphoria. By the middle of September, I started to fly and kept working on setting up and matching the airplanes.

I flew about 5 or 6 flights every day except weekends and flew most of the day then. The wind did not stop me because I knew the conditions waiting for us in Argentina. I flew the P programs, F programs and Unknown maneuvers every day. With the help of Wayne calling me and coaching we flew till I left for Argentina.

In Argentina I was able to contact a very nice group of friends and they provided us with exclusive and outstanding facilities to practice, in a very small town called Camilo Aldao where the US team practiced hard for 5 days. I felt that practice we did together was very important for our team and the individual result.

*BC: You mentioned a specially modified APC propeller; what were the modifications, and how many other propeller setups were you prepared to use in Argentina? What conditions were the other propellers designed to perform under?*

**QS:** Wayne based his prop on an APC 15.5x12 4-blade prop. He took it up to 16.2x13 by using fiberglass and carbon fiber. We tested all kinds of props but the 4 blade outflow all the 2 and 3 blades.

We took to Argentina 4 props all the same kind and that was all. That tells you how happy I was with that prop!

*BC: What advice can you give the younger pilots aspiring to make the United States F3A team in the future, to help them prepare for the world stage?*

**QS:** Practice and practice, but practice smart. I believe managing well the time is a key factor to get practice done and solid. Like practicing with all kinds of weather conditions, and practicing all kinds of maneuvers to get ready for the Unknowns. Practice the known P and F to eliminate every little mistake. Try different set ups.

As any other sport, your desire and the power of your soul will take you to where you want along with discipline, being open to criticism, having an open mind to set up, your perseverance and being a good sportsman.

*BC: With this goal achieved, what are your next goals as a Pattern pilot?*

**QS:** Keep flying and enjoying F3A. I do not think reaching my goal will change much how I feel and enjoy flying precision aerobatics. Designing airplanes is my other passion and that is something I want to keep doing as well in F3A. Every season is something new to do, to try and that is what I enjoy so much with F3A.

Another goal will be supporting young talents coming up and try to help them to one day be in the position that I am today. If I can be part of a project like that I will be very proud too.

Quique, thank you for sharing your thoughts. I am excited about and proud of your win here in the US, and I am looking forward to your leadership for Team USA in the future.

In Ron Chidgey's 1987 article he outlined the direction that he felt F3A needed to go in the US for our teams to be competitive. He outlined five points.

- 1) "Get yourself a coach and do your serious practicing with him or her.
- 2) "Read the rule book. Better still, study the rule book.
- 3) "Don't let yourself get into the habit of just grinding out flight after flight...
- 4) "Be humble when you win and graceful when you don't.
- 5) "Fly your own design, or at least one you can be closely identified with..."

The 2007 US F3A team did a great job of following the advice Ron gave 20 years ago. His intent was to guide the US back to preeminence in the word Pattern scene—which has been done, in large part.

This past year the National Society of Radio Controlled Aerobatics (NSRCA) adopted the US F3A team for fund-raising purposes, establishing a year-round program that Rusty Dose currently chairs. Visit the Web site for information.

The NSRCA is the AMA's SIG for RC Aerobatics and runs the Pattern Nats these days. It also hosts the Teams Selection Finals, which is usually held in conjunction with the Nats. For now the organization's gaze has shifted to Portugal in 2009, where Quique and the next three F3A team members will compete in the World Championships.

Congratulations to the 2007 team, and best wishes to those pilots who are hoping to win their own place in history and a spot on the team in 2008!

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*The following was written by Eric Henderson, in his Radio Control Aerobatics column, published in the May 2008 issue of Model Aviation magazine.*

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## **The US's new ambassador for RC Aerobatics**

The Chinese say that "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." In the case of the new FAI F3A World Champion—Quique Somenzini—you could say that it began with his first

takeoff in 1977! Quique (pronounced “Key-Kay”) flew a long journey to win the individual World Championship back for the US in 2007.

When asked about how he got into RC and competing, Quique said he owed everything to his father, Mario. He was not only supportive, but he also taught Quique how to handle both success and failure like a gentleman. Mario passed away in 2004 while Quique was competing in the Tucson Aerobatic Shootout in Arizona.

Quique has tremendous credentials; he is a winner in many forms of aerobatic flying. He is a four-time US pilot in FAI F3A Aerobatics, and he has been in the top 10 in eight World Championships, earning an impressive three second places.

Last year Quique stood on the podium as the individual World Champion. That journey has covered much more than 1,000 miles. He earned that world title every step of the way.

In other categories, Quique is a four-time Tournament of Champions competitor, a three-time Don Lowe Masters competitor, and winner, a two-time Tucson Aerobatic Shootout competitor, and a Freestyle Champion and Extreme Flight Championships Champion.

Married in China in 2001, and thinking of his family’s future, Quique came to love and work in the US. He had been here more than 20 times with his hobby/competition and was drawn—as were so many before him—to the land of opportunity.

Quique has made his home in the US and is raising his American-born children in Ohio. He runs an RC model business with Wayne Ulery and represents JR in testing its products and as a Team JR member.

Once you are a US resident, you qualify to pay US taxes, perform military service, and, in many cases, are eligible to represent the US in a host of sporting events, etc. Almost the only thing you can’t do is vote or become the American president. The AMA recognizes US residency as a qualification that makes pilots eligible to be selected for the USA world team(s).

There were two ways Quique could have made it to the 2007 F3A World Championships. He could have taken the relatively easy route of representing Argentina. However, he felt strongly that because his home was in the US, he should take the more difficult and risky path of attempting to qualify through the US Team Trials.

(Christophe Paysant-Le Roux [CPLR]—the multiple and 2005 World Champion—chose to qualify for his country in a similar way. I’ll have more about the effect of that parallelism later.)

A dozen or so pilots in the US are more than capable of making it onto the team. In addition, there is the talent of already well-established and repeat team members Chop Hyde, Sean McMurtry, and Jason Shulman.

After the 2007 US Team Trials, we had two new members on the team. Jason Shulman was still there with his effervescent talent, but there was the addition of Quique Somenzini and the young but talented Andrew Jesky.

To give you a feel for the level of competition for the team positions, the next three spots were filled with pilots who had resumes that included multiple US championship titles, a dozen appearances on the US world team, and a couple World Championships trophies. You had to be better than the best to make the US team in 2007!

Following is the interview I did with Quique after the World Championships.

***EH:** How did you prepare for the 2007 Worlds?*

**QS:** First of all I chose the right airplane. My model was the Euphoria Oxai biplane, 1,690mm wingspan, 1,970mm length, 1,350 square inches, weight 4.88 kilograms with a YS 170. Receiver battery is a 4.8 mAh NiMH, radio is a JR 12X. Servos: ailerons, 3421 SA x 4; elevator, 9411SA; pull-pull rudder, 8611SA

Preparations take a very long time. They began with me setting up four planes that match as close as possible. The idea to make them very, very identical. With four planes that are the same, there is still a number 1, 2, 3, and 4. The favorite being No. 1.

***EH:** How often did you practice?*

**QS:** I practiced every day. In the morning I would fly three or four flights, and then in the afternoon I would fly three or four flights. Sometimes this would be to set up the planes, the radios, and the engines.

With the airplanes working, my practice would be first flight, a P-07, or an F-07 to simulate a real contest. I'd fly them my best and land. Then a second flight where I would do the same. On the third flight, I would isolate any problems and fix them.

***EH:** How do you practice the Unknown schedules?*

**QS:** The FAI has a list of all the possible maneuvers that can be chosen for a Finals Unknown schedule. I practice all the hard and unusual maneuvers until I can do them. Ryan Smith—who is only 20—was my caller when I practice here and in Argentina. I use all of the previous Unknown schedules to give me a taste, and sometimes I make up my own.

***EH:** Tell me about the Preliminary rounds.*

**QS:** I had a very shaky start and did not fly until 11 a.m. There was a strong wind blowing from behind, which made it very hard to take off. The plane kept looking at the judges. Everyone had hard conditions, so I suppose it was fair.

Let's take a moment to review how an F3A World Championships competition is structured and scored. It really is two contests: a four-round team championship and a six-round Finals contest.

Approximately 140 pilots fly the Preliminary schedule for four rounds. The best three results per flier of the four rounds are added to produce a complete position list for all the competitors. From the Preliminary-round position list, the top scores of three pilots per country are added to determine which national team wins the trophy.

You are allowed to send three pilots per country to the World Championships in addition to the current World Champion, who is invited back on an exemption. This is great for the exempt pilot, but the snag is that his or her Preliminary points do not count toward his or her country's team. If you enter as a team member, your points will count toward the team trophy.

CPLR, the 2005 champion, qualified by entering the Team Trials for his country. It paid off for France because in 2007 the team results were:

- 1) France
- 2) US
- 3) Japan

***EH:** How did the team championship competition work out?*

**QS:** At the end of the Preliminaries, Japan, France, and the USA were all in the running for the title. After the computer had taken away all the highs and lows and normalized the scores, the totals gave victory to France.

***EH:** How was morale on the US team after that?*

**QS:** This year it was very good. We practice as a team. In Argentina the spirit was very good. Jason flew the best that I have seen him fly in any competition. Andrew flew strongly and exceeded expectations in his first time with a USA team. Everyone treated this USA team very well.

After the Preliminary rounds, the contest changes into a Semifinals-and-Finals format. The top 20 finalists enter the Semifinals and are whittled down to 10 Finalists who then compete in a different format for the title of F3A individual World Champion.

The Semifinals is the "three-score" round in which each pilot begins the day with a carryover of his or her normalized score from the Preliminaries. Then the contestants fly only two rounds, but they have to use the F-07 "Finals" schedule. There are fewer maneuvers in the Finals schedule, but they are significantly harder to fly.

Then the best two scores are taken from a pilot's Semifinals carryover and/or his or her two flights that day. All US team members made it through to the top 10 in 2007.

***EH:** Were you confident that you would make the Finals out of the top 20 pilots from the Prelims?*

**QS:** When you fly against the best in the world, you have no time to be confident. I was just happy to make it into the Finals. One round, we used too much time to get my plane in the air because the wind kept moving my plane on the runway. It took too long to position the plane, so I ran out of flying time and lost my landing points.

In another round, I had an engine with dirt in it so I had to change planes while the clock was running. This left me only six minutes to complete the whole schedule. I had to use my No. 2 backup plane and you could say that was why I'm in the Finals.

- 1) CPLR
- 2) Tetsuo Onda
- 3) Quique Somenzini
- 4) Jason Shulman
- 5) Sebastiano Silvestri
- 6) Yoichiro Akiba
- 7) Stephanie Carrier
- 8) Andrew Jesky
- 9) Koji Suzuki
- 10) Benoit Paysant-Le Roux

***EH:** What do you remember about the Finals?*

**QS:** This was the strongest competition I was in. All top 10 pilots brought their “A” game. I had a good draw and flew right after Onda. Two biplanes flew back to back. Then, in another round, three followed each other. Jason flew very well and CPLR was very good when his plane was in the air. Onda has come up to the top.

***EH:** When did you know you had won?*

**QS:** You don’t believe that you have won until you stand on the podium with the trophy and you hear “The Star-Spangled Banner” play and see your flag in the middle. This was a great day.

After the dust had settled, the 2007 F3A World Championships results were:

- 1) Quique Somenzini
- 2) CPLR
- 3) Tetsuo Onda
- 4) Jason Shulman
- 5) Sebastiano Silvestri
- 6) Koji Suzuki
- 7) Stephane Carrier
- 8) Andrew Jesky
- 9) Yoichiro Akiba
- 10) Benoit Paysant-Le Roux

It is special that the two French brothers were in the Finals. Also significant was that all members of the French, US, and Japanese teams made it to the Finals. This was a hard-fought finale to a great competition in which nobody was allowed to win two rounds to get a perfect 2,000 to take the World Champion title.

***EH:** What would you do differently?*

**QS:** I now know that it is important to practice other things—not just flying. I should practice what happens on the ground, in the wind, and how to change planes when the clock is ticking.

***EH:** You flew with the new JR 12X at the World Championships. We both fly Mode 1. Do you still need that radio?*

**QS:** When I do not need it anymore, I will call you!

I am familiar with Quique's journey to the US, having immigrated here in 1982. I know what it feels like to leave my old country, England, behind and start a new family and a new life in a different country.

What I will never know is what it feels like to be originally Argentinean, fly in an F3A World Championships in Argentina representing the US, and win on top of all that!

It takes a special person to do what Quique has done. Not only has he bought the title to the US, but he has done it with style and class. We are so fortunate to have a new ambassador for RC Aerobatics flying our flag.

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*The following was written by John Glezellis, in his RC Scale Aerobatics column, published in the June 2012 issue of Model Aviation magazine.*

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## **Interview with Quique Somenzini, Part One**

### **Introduction**

It will always be my goal to provide you, the reader, with the tools needed to become successful in this wonderful sport.

I first became interested in both Scale and Precision Aerobatics at the age of 10, after attending the 1994 Tournament of Champions (TOC) with my parents. After seeing a world-class event such as that, I was addicted!

It is important to have a role model in life, someone whom you can look up to. In my competitive career, I have always admired a few pilots, such as Hanno Prettnner, Christophe Paysant Le Roux, and Quique Somenzini. These pilots are amazing, and have had a huge impact on aerobatic airplanes as we know them today.

For more than two decades, Hanno designed many airplanes and won many world-class events, including the TOC in Las Vegas! Christophe has won the F3A World Championship multiple times, as well as the TOC in Las Vegas in 2000.

Quique Somenzini won the TOC in Las Vegas in 1994, 1997, 1998, 1999, and has been in the top three several times! Additionally, he won the Don Lowe Masters three times, was two-time Tucson Shootout Freestyle Champion, XFC Champion in 2004, four-time US F3A National Champion, the Freestyle World Champion, as well as F3A World Champion. Quique currently works for Horizon Hobby Distributors, where he designs airplanes.

This month I will cover something special that has been a pleasure to write. I interviewed Quique, and the interview will be split into two parts. The first portion is in this column. It covers how he became interested in flying and competition, and gives some advice for you in your aerobatic endeavors.

To view the second half of the interview, visit the *Model Aviation* website at [www.ModelAviation.com](http://www.ModelAviation.com). [Editor's Note: See end of this biography for a modified version of Part II] The online segment will cover Quique's personal life, as well as his daily tasks at Horizon Hobby Distributors to provide you with many excellent-flying airplanes. Without further delay, let's get started!

*JG: Quique, how and when did you first get started in RC?*

**QS:** I became interested and began to fly Radio Control airplanes because of my father, Mario. When I began to fly, he was already the F3A National Champion in Argentina, as well as the South American National Champion at that time, which was the late 1970s. Specifically, it was in July of 1976 that I flew RC for the first time. Before that, I spent many hours cleaning my father's airplanes, but it paid off!

Originally, my dad wanted my older sister, Laura, to fly. During this time period, I observed my sister and her flying progress. In fact, I often went to pick up the airplane after most landings, even when they were far away from the runway!

As time went on, my father realized that Laura did not have the same motivation as me, and then it was my time to learn! My father built my first airplane, which was a four-channel shoulder wing model that had an HP 40 motor and an Orbit radio. I was hooked!

*JG: I know that you became interested in competition aerobatics at an early age, and you were actually F3A Champion of Argentina at the tender age of 12. What were the key ingredients to your success at such an early age?*

**QS:** I guess competition was in my genes. My father was very successful in racing speed bikes, go-karts, and cars (in the 1500cc class), and then he began to compete in F3A. With time, it was only natural that I, too, would start competing and continue his passion.

After only three months of flying, I was already flying the F3A class. While it was not perfect, I was able to complete the entire sequence. Even though I placed third at the Nationals in Argentina, my father advised me to move down one class to compete in many local and regional contests so that I could gain the proper experience needed in not only a flying sense, but also how to manage and deal with pressure.

I followed his advice and despite competing in lower class, I won many contests. Similarly, I started to fly at many air shows for the same reasons. With this input, I soon realized that he was correct. By 1979, I was ready and competed at the Nationals and World Team Trial competition in Argentina. I won first place, and my father was second.

We went to South Africa to compete at the World Championship, and this event was also the last time that my father flew a model airplane. After the event, he said that he would be my mechanic and would support me as much as possible. Now, being older and having children of my own, I can see how excited and proud my father was of me!

Let's take a break, as I want to share a small story with you. While competing in South Africa, I drew to fly number one in the flight order. Imagine that! Imagine being only 12 years old and



being the first to fly! When that morning came, everyone from my team was ready to go, but I was still in bed. I didn't want to fly, as I felt too much pressure.

My father wasn't sure what to do, so he went downstairs and ended up purchasing a watch for me. It was a Citizen digital watch. He returned to my room and surprised me with this gift. I was so excited that I quickly got ready and went to the competition feeling less pressure, as I was the happiest boy on the earth with my new gift! Thanks for that, Dad!

***JG:** You have been nicknamed the “Godfather of 3-D.” In fact, I still remember seeing you at the 1994 TOC in Las Vegas, and watching with pure amazement during your Freestyle program as multiple low-level torque rolls, waterfalls, and many other 3-D maneuvers were performed for the first time in front of the crowd. How did you first begin flight-testing such maneuvers?*

**QS:** Before we discuss all of the details, let me first say that pure 3-D does not involve torque rolls as defined in a traditional sense. I think the torque roll was first performed in the late 1960s by full-scale aerobatic pilots. I started to perform torque rolls in 1986, but I had to pull to a vertical up-line, bleed off speed, and perform a torque roll at a fairly high altitude. This wasn't 3-D flying!

It wasn't until 1994 that I began to fly true 3-D as we know it today. True 3-D involves the airplane being able to “fly” beyond its stall. Believe it or not, I started flying 3-D in September of 1994---only a month before the TOC!

For the 1994 TOC, a change in the rules allowed larger airplanes to be flown. For doing this, some bonus points would be given to competitors who flew larger models. While this was my third TOC, it would be my first one with a larger model, but I wasn't alone! Rather, all of the competitors faced the same issue. Since the size bonus was in existence, it paved the future for Giant Scale airplanes, as it pushed designs to be larger than ever before, as we know them today!

We got my airplane, which was a Robert Godfrey 37% Extra 300S, by late June and finished [it] in July. Because I only had one airplane of this size, I began practicing with a smaller airplane to become familiar with the new programs and design a Freestyle sequence. One month before our trip to Las Vegas, we brought the Godfrey Extra 300S to the flying field to begin exploring the airplane's flight characteristics.

For me, it was an interesting experience, as I was self-taught. The Internet was not as it is today, and I was the first to have a large airplane like that in my area. However, as soon as I began to fly my giant Extra 300S, I had an instant connection with it, and felt that it could fly very well at slow speeds. Then, one night, it all changed for me...

I had a dream. While it sounds like it does in the movies, it is true. One morning, I woke up after having a dream about flying the airplane beyond its stall. Honestly, I thought about this a lot and that is partly due to the dream, in my opinion.

I told my father that we had to increase the size of the elevators on the airplane. Both my father and I built a new set of horizontal stabilizers that had these changes done to them and installed two servos per elevator. Bingo!

On the same day that we installed this modified stabilizer to the airplane, I was performing Harriers (which I called Cobras at the time), and the next day, I was performing inverted Harriers and tumbles, which was the Waterfall! Then, with time, torque rolls that were very low in altitude and entered at a speed that was beyond the airplanes stall. After these flights commenced, I decided that we should do the same thing with the rudder! We increased the rudder and things got better!

Once in Las Vegas, we spent about 10 days on a dry lake, flying and choreographing these flights to music. At the end, all of our hard work paid off and we won the contest. Now the door was open for the future. We showed the beginning of 3-D, and that is something that people today are enjoying!

***JG:** In preparing for an event such as the TOC, or for that matter, the F3A World Championships (which you have also won), what was your typical practice routine? For example, how many flights would you perform on a given day, and what would you practice?*

**QS:** Competitions like the TOC and various F3A events and championships are the most challenging contests to prepare for due to the type of contest that they are. There is a great level of performance from all of the competitors, and in order to be at the top, it takes a great amount of dedication!

My theory was, and still is, the fact that your airplane is your best buddy. During all flight sessions, the airplane needs to help you. As humans, our emotions continuously change, and it is often difficult to perform the same, day after day. After all, consistency is the key in competition, and to do this, the airplane needs to support you in a contest by being properly set up to cater to your preferences.

For example, the engine should be adjusted so that you obtain consistent power. The airplane should be trimmed as best it can [be] so you can only focus on the sequence, not the airplane's "bad" flight characteristics. After I spend a lot of time trimming and setting up the airplane and engine, I focus on practicing for the event. About a month to a month-and-a-half before the event, I would fly every day, double shift! I would fly between three and five flights in the morning and another three to five flights in the afternoon. Only heavy rain would stop me!

Through all of my practice flights, I would be in a constant search for the best airplane setup possible. In doing this, it would result in rather consistent results, which are extremely important if you wanted to win a big championship-type event. All in all, one excellent flight would mean nothing if your next flight was only okay.

***JG:** What advice can you give to a person who is looking to participate in competition aerobatics? How should he or she get started?*

**QS:** While I may sound like an old guy by saying this, today things are a lot easier compared to when I first began competing, and yes, I am only 45 years old! In the past 10 years, the evolution of the hobby has been incredible.

Technology has changed so much and become [so] affordable that it is tangible for most. However, one thing that has not changed is practice! If someone is thinking about competing, my best advice would be to burn either fuel or watts!

But, be consistent with a plan. Concentrate on your airplane's performance, learn the characteristics of your model, and spend time setting up your aircraft. Then, organize a practice routine and what you hope to achieve by the end of each practice session.

It is always important to be honest with yourself and to focus on what is difficult for your abilities, and to practice that over and over again. While we all have weak areas, recognize [your] area and work on it!

Lastly, always remember to have fun and enjoy every moment. At the end of the day, this is the most important part, as by doing so you will have a great time and many great memories!

### **Closing Thoughts**

I hope you have enjoyed this interview. Being interested in aerobatics, it is always neat finding out how a successful pilot, such as Quique, started out in flying and what his thoughts are on this fantastic hobby. I believe there is plenty to learn from such idols and/or mentors.

Remember, Visit [www.ModelAviation.com](http://www.ModelAviation.com) for the second half of this column!

**Until next time, fly hard!**

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*The following was written by John Glezellis, published online in June 2012 on the Model Aviation website. ([www.ModelAviation.com](http://www.ModelAviation.com))*

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### **Quique Somenzini Interview Part II**



*Written by [John Glezellis](#).  
Find Part I on page 119 in the June 2012 issue.  
Part II Interview with Quique Somenzini.*

**JG:** *I know that you have designed quite a few airplanes, not only when you had your own aircraft business, but now, working for Horizon Hobby Distributors. What is your typical day like?*

**QS:** In the past, I had my own airplane business, (Quique's Aircraft Company), and enjoyed working with Wayne Ulery in owning [the] company together. We brought to the market many good airplanes that people enjoyed, which meant a lot to us. Now, I work for Horizon Hobby Distributors, but things are pretty similar!

People often see Horizon Hobby Distributors as a large company, and believe me, it is! However, the projects I work on are driven by my personal passion. In fact, each of the developers at Horizon has a passion for the hobby, and in that sense, it is similar to the work ethics I had when I was working for my own company.

Now I live in Champaign, Illinois, and about 2 miles from Horizon. This is pretty exciting for me, as I can't wait to come to work every day. Like I said earlier, it is similar to when I worked for myself, as the "drive" is there. Now, I can interact with more people to further show my ideas and how they can have an impact on others. Honestly, I could not ask for a better situation.

***JG:** While working for Horizon Hobby Distributors, what has been your favorite design and why?*

**QS:** So far, my favorite design has been the new Firebird Stratos. Yes, I know, it is a trainer model! However, it is very special [to] me, as I wanted to work on a project for my sons to learn how to fly on!

***JG:** I know that many modelers may not be aware of the amount of time and thought that goes into a production model. Approximately how long does it take to make a model, from the first design thoughts to actual production?*

**QS:** From an idea, it can take anywhere between 12 and 18 months to develop a product enough to enter the market, and this, of course, depends on the complexity of the aircraft. While it seems like a long time, it involves a large group of people who need to coordinate many different aspects of the business.

For example, time isn't only spent on developing and producing the airplane. A large amount of time extends into the business aspect, like marketing, purchasing, sales, etc. Everyone needs to work together to ensure that everything is complete by the time the product is initially released into the market.

***JG:** Aside from flying, what other hobbies and/or interests do you have?*

**QS:** Being from Argentina, it is only natural that I enjoy soccer. My two older sons play soccer, and we often play together. When I was younger, I enjoyed running as well. Another pastime of mine is watching Formula 1 racing, and lately (while still being related to flying), I have had a large interest in flying RC jets.

***JG:** I know that you have a few children. Have they shown an interest in flying?*

**QS:** Sandra and I have three children. Luciano is eight, Sebastian is five, and Nicolas is four-months old.

Luciano showed an interest in flying, and that is how I started thinking about the initial concept behind the Firebird Stratos. I wanted to design and make a trainer for him to learn how to fly on. While he enjoys flying, he has taken a liking to the mechanical parts that make the airplane fly.

Sebastian is also enthusiastic in flying. Do I expect them to all be fliers? While that would be good, it really depends on them. Of course, I can only hope!



*Quique with two of his most recent designs, while working at Horizon Hobby Distributors. The Stratos he is holding is one of his favorite designs despite being a trainer model. On the ground is the successful Carbon-Z Yak 54 from E-Flite.*



*Quique, shown with his father, Mario, during an awards ceremony at an F3A Invitational Contest in Japan in 1992.*



*Quique with Benito Bertolani during the FAI/F3A World Championships in South Africa. Yes, Quique was only 12 years old!*



*Quique and his team wait to fly at the 1994 Tournament of Champions (TOC).*



*Quique with Steve Rojecki and Miss TOC, after Quique was awarded a large first-place trophy.*



*After winning the 1994 TOC, Quique and his father were invited to the 1994 Japanese Air meet. The two were pictured on the cover of Radio Control Technique, a Japanese magazine.*



*Mario Somenzini and "Viruta" fuel an airplane before a practice session at the 1994 TOC.*



*Wayne Ulery and Quique after the maiden flight of their first Yak 54. The flight took place in Springfield, Ohio, and the airplane was used later that year at the 2002 TOC.*

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