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The P-18 build session with local students was a huge success, thanks largely to the efforts of Magnificent Mountain Men and Pikes Peak Soaring Society volunteers, under the leadership of John McGrath and Jerry Murphy. The flying portion of the event will be held Thursday.



Mini-Stick Mass Launch contestants, moments before the launch: (L-R) Rob Romash, Sorin Slater, Jerry Murphy, Don DeLoach (first), Wyatt Wear (second), Larry Coslick, and Mike Fedor (third). Photo by Rick Pangell.

Wednesday was the day many of us were waiting for at the Colorado Springs Nats. At 9 a.m. the local students gathered for the much-anticipated first day of the P-18 Pro-Am. The two-day event sold out quickly, thanks to ample publicity and generous sponsorship by Free Flight cottage suppliers FAI Model Supply, LaserCutPlanes.com and the National Museum of World War II Aviation in Colorado Springs. Jerry Murphy and John McGrath did all the heavy lifting, from promotions to kits production to volunteer coordination. They are to be greatly commended.

The build room was the cafe/dining room attached to the flying site. It proved to be absolutely perfect for this session, although a tad warm and stuffy with all those bodies crammed in there for three-plus hours. There was an overflow crowd of 25 students, and nearly that many “Pro” modelers on hand to assist with cutting and gluing of planes. John McGrath of the Magnificent Mountain Men club is a natural with kids and he did a superb job of leading the effort.

The best part for me as a “Pro” was seeing the looks of anticipation on many of the kids’ faces. They brimmed with excitement at the thought of their handmade creations taking to the air the next morning. This is surely the best part for us Pros—fanning that little spark

of interest into a flame for the future. Who knows if a future world champion will have been created by this event? Only time will tell.

Wednesday’s flying got off to a raucous start with three exciting mass launches. In Phantom Flash, Bill Carney had one of the best-flying models, but it got knocked out by a midair in the first few seconds.

Sixteen-year-old Jace Pivonka of Denver built his entry the night before, trimmed it out hastily in just a few minutes, and placed second with a beautiful flight that went all the way to the ceiling.

He was beaten by Dick Wood of Phoenix, who had Rob Romash feverishly fixing his badly broken model just seconds before the launch signal. Whew! Who doesn’t love mass launches? Anything can (and does) happen!

Next was the P-24 Mass Launch, featuring a strong field of seven fliers. Bill Carney came in first, with an expertly executed flight that was well out of danger below the ceiling and seemed to cruise forever. Local man Chuck Etherington was a close second followed by Mike Fedor in third.

World War II No-Cal Combat was won by this writer followed by Rick Pangell, Mike Fedor, and Jerry Murphy, in that order.

The afternoon lightweight bookended a 6 p.m. Mini-Stick Mass Launch. I was the unlikely winner of it in 6:09

when Indoor legends Larry Coslick and Rob Romash fell victim to mishaps early in their launches. Senior age flier Wyatt Wear finished second with a very fine flight on his first Mini-Stick. Wyatt showed a lot of perseverance through mishaps and repairing the model throughout the day.

Rob Romash got his revenge in the regular AMA Mini-Stick later in the evening when he topped me 6:51 to 6:20. I didn’t expect anything different from the undisputed King of Minis.

Rounding out Wednesday’s flying was a strong turnout of seven A-6 fliers. As expected, site record holder Bill Gowen easily outpaced the field with an even 6:00 flight. Bill’s worst flight of the five was still more than a minute ahead of yours truly, the second-place finisher at 4:19, and third-place finisher,

Jace Pivonka, who had 3:53.

FIL provided some drama that lasted well into the evening. Larry Coslick wrapped up first place around dinnertime, with a two-flight total of 20:08. By approximately 7 p.m., he had left the building. Rob Romash got out his model very late and only had time to squeeze in four flights of the allowed six, with a two-best total of 15:16. Meanwhile, Dick Wood had been relentless all afternoon and evening, juggling three events and slowly improving his FIL times. He scored an 8:09 on his third flight, which meant he only needed 7:08 to pull ahead of Rob Romash into second place. After some good-natured “encouragement” by Rob, Dick pulled off a 7:29 right at the closing horn to secure the second place Nats plaque. Congratulations, Dick!

—Don DeLoach



MORE FROM THE P-18 BUILD SESSION!



LOOK! ROMASH CHOKED ON HIS LAST F1L FLIGHT!

