



Crosswinds

July
2006



Newsletter for the Spring Area Radio Kontrol Society

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From the Cockpit by Chris Fredona

Welcome to the July 2006 Crosswinds newsletter.

As we start this new year, I would like to first thank all of officers and members who contributed to SPARKS last year. Duane Neefe, Jim Greer, Diane Marson and George Terry led us through a very difficult year with the near loss of our field and the resulting declining membership. The officers and field search teams were able to secure an alternate field and to provide visitor rights at the other area clubs to ensure our ability to fly and enjoy our sport during this period. Let's also thank the many individuals that organized our contests and fun flies, published this newsletter, instructed our new students, maintained our field and ran our website and the hobby shops that have supported us with gifts and discounts for our raffles and prizes.

Although we still have long term issues concerning the availability of our current flying site and will need to continue to investigate and pursue alternatives, we also need to turn our attention to rebuilding the club. The uncertainty associated with the possible sale of our flying site lead many long time members to join other clubs and we have taken on relatively few new members this year which leaves our membership well below our limit. As SPARKS members, we must spread the word that we are alive and well. Tell the Hobby Shops, your friends and other area clubs you might fly at. I am very interest in any ideas you may have for attracting new members this year so we stay a viable organization.

I see a growing interest in pattern flying as a result of the excellent presentations and encouragement from our current pattern flyers. This has brought many of us together as we learn and share in this pursuit. What other events, contests, interests and ideas can we find that will further enhance the SPARKS experience.

Our next membership meeting will be on Wednesday, July 12th, rather than the July 5th, due to the 4th of July holidays. Hope to see you all there.

Fly safe!

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• **Mark your Calendar now!!!**



• By a vote of the membership at the June meeting,
• the **JULY meeting has been changed to**

• **The second Wednesday - July 12th, 2006**

• **Greg Riede will be the featured speaker**

• This is a **one** time change due to the closeness of the July 4th holiday.

- After much discussion, it was decided that we establish a grace period
- in relation to a renewing member and the initiation fee usually assessed when paying
- late.
- Although dues must still be paid by the end of the July meeting, a
- member who renews after July 12th, will only be assessed a
- \$ 25.00 initiation fee, if dues are paid by the August 2nd meeting.

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Highlights from the June Meeting

The following members were elected for the Club 2006 - 2007 year.

- President - Chris Fredona
- Vice President and Safety Officer - Mike Rose
- Treasurer - George Terry
- Secretary - Diane Marson
- Newsletter Editor - Diane Marson

President-elect Chris Fredona asked for a volunteer to be Program Chairman.

Greg Riede expressed the thanks of all the Club members to Duane Neefe, for a fantastic job as President the past year.

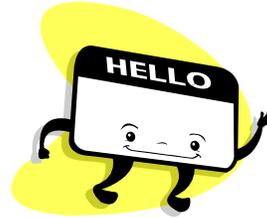
Since we were faced with losing our field, the year became a very busy and stressful time. Duane meet the challenge with dedication, hard work, and lots of hours spent up and down the back roads, phone calls and even performed Instructor duties as well. Well done, Duane, we give you our heartfelt thanks....

In lieu of a guest speaker, we watched an AMA film on the Spektrum DX6 radio system. Channel concerns are a thing of the past with the no-pin, no crystal, no glitches or interference of the 2.4 GHz Spektrum DSM technologies.

For more information checkout their website: <http://www.spektrumrc.com/>

Here are the names of members who have joined SPARKS in 2006.

Alan and Jonathan Buckner
Darrell and Dexter Christilles
Finnis Hopson
Travis Plummer
Jack Robbins
Dallas Slovak
Craig Waltjer
Brett Wickizer



We welcome our latest members and hope to see them at the field and meetings often.

George Terry, Treasurer, reports as of June 25th, we have 59 paid members, 3 honorary, 2 known not renewing and **60 unpaid**.

If you are one of the 60 unpaid, and you wish to renew, please mail your check to the post office box or bring it to the July 12th meeting.

Meet our youngest "New Solo Pilot"

Dexter Christilles.....

Dexter and his Dad, Darrell joined Sparks about six weeks ago and Dexter has already earned his Solo certificate at the age of 12.



His instructor, Duane Neefe wrote....

"Dexter did touch and goes and landings without stopping his engine or breaking a prop. I could never challenge him enough. One time when the bugs were very bad at the field he asked me to take control of his plane while he got the bugs off him. I flipped the plane to inverted and when he finished getting the bugs off him he said he was ready. He said the plane is upside down? I told him to just hold some down elevator. I gave it back to him and he went out and turned around. He then rolled back to right side up and continued to fly. "

"Dexter was a great student who listened and did everything asked of him. When Dexter took the FPE and landed for the final time everyone at the field applauded since he did such a great job of flying. This young man is what the hobby is all about. "

Entering the 7th grade in the fall, Dexter's favorite subject is math. As with any young man, he loves computers, video games, skate boards and "Skim boarding".

FYI, "skim boarding" is similar to skating boarding except it's done on water.

Well done and Congratulations!!

June Model of the Month

The Excelleron 90 Pattern Aircraft

By Chris Fredona

As a result of the pattern contest that Sparks put on last year and the excellent programs by various members on pattern ship construction and flying, I decided to join the fun and attempt to fly with the precision Glenn and others have demonstrated to us.

In the search for a moderately priced but good performing entry level ship, I polled a number of our members and finally selected the Excelleron 90 from Sportsman Aviation.

This aircraft has the following statistics:

- Wing Span 66.5 Inches
- Wing Area 865 Sq Inches
- Length 67.5 Inches
- Weight 8.25 Lbs
- Engine OS Max .91 2 Stroke
- Servos 5 Hi-tech Digitals with 90 oz inches torque
- Propeller APC 13X8



This ARF model comes with the major assemblies built and nicely covered, although the final assembly time was quite bit longer than expected. In particular, the use and alignment of the flexible engine mounts proved to be more difficult than the rigid mounting I was used to. The other area was the pull - pull cable controls for the elevator and rudder which required working in very tight areas when attaching the cables to the servo horns.

Once completed, the aircraft balanced easily at the recommended location with no lead being required in nose or tail. The control throws were adjusted to the recommended values and the ship prepared for its maiden flight.

As the engine is inverted, I did experience some difficulty in starting the engine the first time as fuel apparently accumulates in the head when sitting and needs to be cleared before attempting to start.

Duane Neefe was present during the initial take off and flight and his help was appreciated in trimming the aircraft. Once trimmed, the aircraft flies very well although was overly responsive. In later flights, exponential was added to flight controls and dual rates set for aileron and elevator. These changes were very helpful and make the Excelleron very smooth and easy to fly.

The OS .91 pulls the model well and has reasonable vertical performance. Although probably does not match 4 stroke performance in that area.

After 5 flights, I am getting comfortable with the aircraft and ready to begin practicing the Sportsman sequence.

The Excelleron and I will see you all at the field.

Your First Radio

by Lee Dillenbeck, Chief Instructor



One of the first questions we as flight instructors often get asked is "what brand of radio should I get for my first trainer plane". Shortly thereafter comes the next question, "should I just get a simple four or six channel radio, or opt for a more expensive, computerized radio with more functions and capabilities? The appeal of such an option is that they can use such a radio for more advanced planes as they progress in the hobby.

Every instructor seems to have their own opinion on this question, and not wanting to get in the middle of such debate, I will concede that there are good cases to be made for either side of the argument. However, regardless of how one feels about the "simple radio vs. computer radio for training a new student, the fact remains that more student pilots are showing up at local flying fields with the complex computer radios, and wanting to learn to fly with them. With this simple fact in mind, there are a few issues that probably need to be examined and understood by beginning pilots if they feel like they would prefer to start out with a more capable, multi-function computer radio.

Many of our beginners, especially those with lots of computer/electronics skills seem to want to start out with higher-end computer radio's. While I don't think there is anything inherently wrong with this choice, it CAN in some cases lead to trouble, especially if they get carried away with trying to use all the available electronic "Bells and Whistles" in conjunction with a basic trainer, and still want to learn to fly by means of a club flight instructor, using a buddy/trainer box, and trainer cord.

About now, most folks are probably wondering what the heck I am talking about! After all, aren't the computer radios easier to use when setting up the plane, and don't they offer a lot more flexibility? Please stay with me and I will see if I can explain.

The biggest challenge in such a situation comes when we have a new student show up with a trainer and they have gone in and set up many of the computer functions of their new "Super Whomper 456 XT1" radio system to adjust things like programmable mixes, end points, sub-trims, and maybe Expo on some or all of their controls.

They may have even programmed in dual or triple rates on some controls (I know, it's supposed to just be a simple trainer, but trust me, I have seen folks do it!!!). The problem is that even though the club has multiple trainer boxes (both JR and Futaba/HiTech), those trainer boxes are all just SIMPLE NON-COMPUTER transmitter boxes. Guess what folks...all of that fancy programming done in the "Super Whomper 456 XT1" radio usually DOES NOT CARRY OVER to the simple trainer box! Instead, even though the INSTRUCTOR (who holds the "Super Whomper 456 XT1" transmitter) may have all that capability whenever they release the trainer switch, once the trainer switch is activated, the student often only has the functionality contained in the simple 4 channel trainer box in their hands. Typically that will give them FULL servo travel (regardless of how much they "dialed" it down on their transmitter) and likely no mixing, end point adjustments, sub-trims, dual rates, or Expo.

Granted, with some radio's, there are exceptions, but most often, this is what happens.

Article can't next page please....

Your First Radio, con't

At this point, many people usually ask me "OK, so why doesn't the club just buy computerized trainer boxes"? They tend to say something like, "then they could work with all the computer functions of my new "Super Whomper 456 XTI" radio, right"? Well, unfortunately, the most direct answer is, maybe, and maybe not. Not all computer radio's (even of the same make) seem to have and/or employ the same functionality...or even in the same manner. In other words, some work better together than others, and at least in my experience, it is hard to say in advance which will and which will not work well together. However, more importantly, even if they all DID always work together seamlessly, for the cost of just one computerized "trainer box", the club can easily buy two or maybe even three regular (non-computerized) trainer boxes. Multiple (simple) trainer boxes allows for multiple instructors, flying with multiple students at the same time.

Further, as most beginners will quickly learn, on nice days, the flight line can be pretty busy, and the available instructor(s) often end up having to move rapidly up and down the flight line, putting in flights with one student after another, in rapid succession. Now, imagine if you would, how much time it would take for those instructors to stop everything, and have to **RE-PROGRAM** their computer trainer box for all the individualized functionality required for EACH new student and their specific trainer set-up! Instead of spending time teaching the student how to fly, they end up spending way too much time on the ground trying to get everything sorted out with the students "Super Whomper 456 XTI" radio and the clubs brand "x" computer radio! Worst of all, if just one critical control surface setting is not done correctly, or gets overlooked, the next take-off may be the last!

So does that mean that a student can't use their fancy computerized "Super Whomper 456 XTI" transmitter to learn to fly with? Well, the good news here is that they probably still can use it. However (**and this is important**), when they set up their trainer plane, as much as possible, they need to make all their control surface travel (throw), end point, and differential (if needed) adjustments **MECHANICALLY** at either the control surface linkage, or at the servo arm. If they are not sure how to do this, they should ask one of the experienced club members to show them how.

It is generally OK to use the servo direction reversing function on the radio if needed, as the club trainer boxes do have this capability as well, and this is easily and quickly reset if needed on the trainer boxes.

If the new student pilot follows these recommendations, there should be minimal problems when they go to one of the club flight instructors and get hooked up with a trainer cord and buddy box.

With this said, I personally believe that it is also important that a student attempting to learn to fly with a multi-function "computer radio" resist the temptation to activate un-necessary features when setting up their first basic trainers. Save them for later planes with the capabilities to utilize the more advanced features of the radio! Most trainers just are not all that complicated, and every additional "option" utilized (activated) in their new computer radio can increase the chance of having some obscure switch or setting left in the wrong position.

Article con't next page please...

Your First Radio, con't

I have a term for just such an unfortunate eventuality. I call it "dial a crash" !! Sad as it is, I have seen/heard it happen far too many times. Such an incident usually starts with a conversation like:

Student to friend: "And look, with this new "Super Whomper 456 XTI", all I have to do is flip this switch (click) and then twist this dial to bring up this sub-routine, then select this mode...and (presto) I am now in *wow-the-crowd* mode...with quadruple the normal control surface throw !!!"

Friend: Wow...that's pretty cool. Can you store multiple plane set-ups in the computer?

Student: Oh sure, all I have to do is switch over to model memory (click...beep, beep) and see, I am already on another model!

Friend: Neat! Looks like it can do lots of amazing stuff. Hey, isn't it your turn to go fly with the instructor?

Student: Oh, yeah, thanks for reminding me !

A few minutes later...after taxing the trainer out on the field.

Student: "Taking Off !!!" (sound of engine running up as the plane accelerates)

Student: "Hey, what the *&%" ????" (Following is a loud ..."CRUNCH")

Student: " Man, I don't know what happened... I t just went crazy when I lifted off...it was like it had a mind of it's own" !!!

Instructor: "Let's look at your radio again" (after looking carefully at the transmitter) "Hey, I thought you had it set for model #1 when we flew earlier. Why is this model #2 showing up on the display now"?

Student: "Oh %\$#@*...I guess I forgot to change it back after showing my friend what all my radio could do !!!"

There you have it, a classic "Dial a crash". Oh and if it makes you feel any better, it isn't only beginners/students that make this sort of mistake! However, given their lack of flying time, and experience it can be easier for them to do if they don't pay attention.

So, in review, if as a beginner, you do choose to go ahead and purchase a more capable "computer type" radio for you very first trainer plane, and also plan to utilize our club instructor pilots and club trainer boxes, please review and remember these suggestions. The frustrations, and maybe even the plane you save, may just be your own!

Lee Dillenbeck

SPARKS Chief Flight Instructor

June, 2006

SPARKS REPRESENTED WELL IN RC COMPETITION

Did you know several of your fellow club members are competing in various precision radio control flying events? Two separate categories of events are being represented by SPARKS members - Scale Aerobatics (typically referred to as IMAC) and Nonscale Aerobatics (typically referred to as Pattern).

IMAC.....

IMAC stands for International Miniature Aerobatic Club which is the governing body of RC scale aerobatic events. IMAC events adhere to all AMA regulations and guidelines. IMAC rules are quite extensive, however, key elements for their events would be as follows:

- IMAC aircraft have to be partial scale replicas of planes which have competed in full scale aerobatic competition.
- IMAC aircraft can be of any size but are typically 35% to 40% scale. This means they often have wingspans greater than 10 feet and can weigh in excess of 40 pounds.

Three types of flight sequences are flown at IMAC events - Known, Unknown, and Freestyle. Known sequences are established annually and remain the same throughout the flying season. Unknown sequences are given to a pilot the night before they are to be flown. Freestyle sequences constitute a separate competitive category and are optional based upon pilot choice. Freestyle sequences are flown to music and allow for unrestricted order and use of maneuvers created by the contestant.

IMAC events are divided into five competitive classes - Basic, Sportsman, Intermediate, Advanced, and Unlimited. The following SPARKS members have placed first, second, or third in recent IMAC contests:

Dean Nistetter - Abilene IMAC Shootout - Sportsman - 1st Place

Brett Wickizer - Houston IMAC Shootout - Intermediate - 1st Place

Dean Nistetter - Houston IMAC Shootout - Sportsman - 3rd Place

Brett Wickizer - Houston IMAC Shootout - Freestyle - 2nd Place

Website for IMAC <http://www.mini-iac.com/DesktopDefault.aspx>

**Photos on the next page were taken at various IMAC competitions.....
And contributed by Dean Nistetter**

IMAC photos by Dean Nistetter



Left:
IMAC at
Houston
Jetero



Above: IMAC at Abilene



Above: Abilene Ready Area

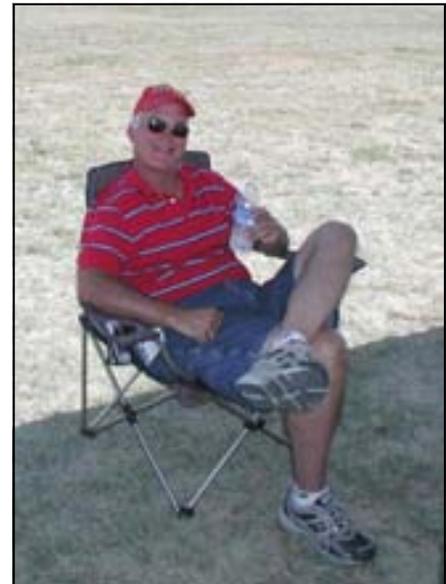


Right: Neat paint job, but difficult to judge

More IMAC photos by Dean Nistetter

Right: Dean's Extra 330

Below: The Louisiana Boys and their Yak



Above left: Glen's color scheme on Steroids

Above right: Kevin Braziel taking a break

Right: Future IMAC pilot



Pattern.....

Pattern contests are governed by the AMA and judged according to the AMA RC Pattern Judges Guide.

Key elements of Pattern events are as follows:

- Pattern aircraft do not have to be replicas of full scale planes.
- Pattern aircraft may not weigh more than 11 pounds (excluding fuel).
- Pattern aircraft may not have a wingspan greater than 2 meters (78.74 inches).
- All pattern sequences are "known" in nature and are established every two years.

Pattern sequences are performed in an aerobatic "box" bounded by lines 60 degrees each side of center on a horizontal line 150 to 175 meters in front of the pilot.

Pattern events are divided into five competitive classes - Sportsman, Intermediate, Advanced, Masters, and FAI . The following SPARKS members have placed first, second, or third in recent Pattern contests:

Ron Hendrick - Waco Pattern Contest - Sportsman - 2nd Place
Jim Sheffield - Waco Pattern Contest - Intermediate - 1st Place
Brett Wickizer - Waco Pattern Contest - Advanced - 1st Place
Mark Hunt - Waco Pattern Contest - Advanced - 3rd Place
Glen Watson - Waco Pattern Contest - Masters - 1st Place

Jim Sheffield - Pensacola Pattern Contest - Intermediate - 1st Place
Glen Watson - Pensacola Pattern Contest - Masters - 1st Place

Ron Hendrick - Temple Pattern Contest - Sportsman - 2nd Place
Jim Sheffield - Temple Pattern Contest - Intermediate - 2nd Place
Richard Lewis - Temple Pattern Contest - Intermediate - 3rd Place
Mark Hunt - Temple Pattern Contest - Advanced - 2nd Place
Glen Watson - Temple Pattern Contest - Masters - 1st Place

Brett Wickizer - Baton Rouge Pattern Contest - Advanced - 1st Place
Brett Wickizer - Baton Rouge Pattern Contest - FAI - 2nd Place

Jim Sheffield - Houston Jetero Pattern Contest - Intermediate - 1st Place
Richard Lewis - Houston Jetero Pattern Contest - Intermediate - 2nd Place
Brett Wickizer - Houston Jetero Pattern Contest - Advanced - 1st Place
Mark Hunt - Houston Jetero Pattern Contest - Advanced - 3rd Place
Glen Watson - Houston Jetero Pattern Contest - Masters - 1st Place

Brett Wickizer - Broken Arrow Pattern Contest - FAI - 1st Place

Jim Sheffield - Nederland Pattern Contest - Intermediate - 2nd Place
Richard Lewis - Nederland Pattern Contest - Intermediate - 3rd Place
Mark Hunt - Nederland Pattern Contest - Advanced - 2nd Place
Brett Wickizer - Nederland Pattern Contest - Advanced - 1st Place

Photos from the Pattern competitions...contributed by Glen Watson..



Left: Glen and Earl

Below right: Mark Hunt and his Dad



Above left: Pattern "Insights"

Right: Pattern evolution



Below: Brett Wickizer judging

Below: Pensacola Winners



Website for Pattern

<http://www.nsrca.org/newguysA.htm>

**SPARKS member
Mark Hunt is featured
on the cover of the
June issue of the
"K-Factor"**

*Photo and article contributed by
Richard Lewis*

The cover shot and related article feature Mark and his Insight with a rather detailed build description and many construction photos.

Mark designed the Insight from the ground up using advanced 3D CAD software and has developed a very nice set of plans.

Mark has made the plans available, and also sells the foam parts to build the airplane at www.insightrc.com.



Mark's Insight is designed to be an easy to build, lightweight, all wood and foam aircraft that is capable of competing at the highest levels of precision aerobatics. The unique design has turned a lot of heads in precision aerobatic circles. Mark went to the AMA Nationals in 2005 to compete with fliers from all over the US and won second place in the Intermediate class with his own Insight.

The "K-Factor" is the national publication of the National Society of Radio Control Aerobatics (NSRCA), the AMA SIG for Radio Control Precision Aerobatics, commonly referred to as Pattern.

Each month, the "K-Factor" provides news from the Precision Aerobatics world, updates from each NSRCA district, and informative articles.

A subscription to the "K-Factor" is only available as a benefit of NSRCA membership.

Go to www.nsrca.org for details on becoming an NSRCA member and to sign up online.

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Many thanks to the following members who contributed such great articles and photos this month. Please send your article, tips, photos, websites, whatever you find interesting for next month's issue. After all, without these contribution, we will not have a newsletter....

Thanks to
Lee Dillenbeck, Richard Lewis, Duane Neeffe,
Dean Nistetter, Glen Watson

Thank you, Diane

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