

The Crazy Rubber Band at the 2006 SAM Eurochamps, Little Rissington

Once again, I need to get an apology in first. This is because any account of a competition when one is participating, is necessarily blinkered by one's concentration on immediate affairs. For example, on the first day, in atrocious wind conditions, starting at 10 am and finishing at 4.30 pm, I managed to complete three qualifying flights with just half an hour to spare. Over half of those 6½ hours was spent retrieving; I snatched half an hour for lunch and the rest was taken up in prep or repairs for the three flights. The only people I spoke to on the flight line were within a few vehicles location of my own car, plus the hard pressed team at control, timekeepers and some interesting encounters downwind. Consequently this story is somewhat introspective. However, once the results were published by the SAM1066 results service it was possible to interpolate and comment on all our events based on these and the subsequent flight-line buzz and pub/campsite chat.

To peruse the results in conjunction with this story, read or download the PDF file from the same web site location use to find this account.



Before getting down to business, I want to describe the upwind terrain (Okay, okay, bear with me!) at Rissington when the direction is from the West or North West, as it was for all three days. We were parked, as ever, on the upwind peri-track. Beyond this, 40 yards away is a 10 foot hedge then a road then a valley which is very wide and very deep. According to "Google Earth", 300 feet elevation differential and this image shows just how adjacent to our flight line (marked "base") that slope is. Imagine then, the prevailing wind, racing across that valley at 20 to 25 mph, churning its way up the 300 foot leeside rise, hitting this tall hedge



and roaring over our heads 40 yards further on. The rollover and turbulence manifesting itself right across the airfield was diabolical and dominated the meeting. The only way to launch was in the imperceptible lulls with no guarantee that these signaled passing (but otherwise plentiful) thermals. Indeed, with just one exception, scrutiny of the results on the first two days show just how difficult it was to make any flyoff even with the necessarily short maxes chosen for the various competitions. This picture, actually taken at Woodbury, dramatizes the effect of launching Warring's "Voodoo" in a 33mph gale.

Now for the downwind terrain (That's more like it!). As mentioned, the wind was in the same direction all three days and in a navigational arc comprising no more than forty-five degrees it was simply awful, with three large compounded hangers strung out beyond the downwind peri-track, a go-cart track, the camp-site, several

copses, a razor wire compound, one small but steep valley and three tree lines all within four minute range on day's one and two. To complete the scene the weather was as follows: Monday: Overcast, 20-25mph, rollover, very turbulent, early shower, otherwise dry. Tuesday: Overcast, 20-25mph, rollover, very turbulent, four torrential thunder storms, otherwise dry. Wednesday: Fine and sunny, up to 10mph gradually increasing, mostly smooth, dry.

Hard hit by the conditions were entries to both the "Flight Cup" (for models over 36" span but smaller than Wakefield), and the "Pre 4oz Wakefield" classes, with only six and two respectively. The latter was a fight to prevent the slaughter of a pair of fragile "Gordon Light's" and to his great credit Keith Horry trumped Roy Tiller, 3.43 vs 2.05.

In the Flight Cup only two made the fly-off. Turner's "Korda" beat Longhurst by default due to the latter losing his "Rara Avis" on the third flight. True to its name, "Avis" showed rare wisdom by landing in a local boozier and was later spotted behind the bar by some celebrating Samlanders who somehow liberated it and are sending it home with its tail between its legs. Long person has now invested in a handheld GPS and is out practising his navigational techniques as I type these words. He is determined not to allow any model to go boozing on its own in future.

Although third placer Peter Michel did not make the fly-off, he had an eye watering first round flight (and adventure) with his "Polydi" of about eight minutes, seen, strangely, to DT long overdue, probably due to a line hang-up. Despite PDM's pessimism, this was retrieved at the insistence of Clive Carpenter by a long range combination of in-car sat-nav/GPS, sophisticated magnetic roof aerials and radio location, having first extrapolated direction and wind-speed to place the model in the village of Fifield, some 3½ miles away. Upon vehicular arrival at the crime scene, the radio signal was loud and clear and the lost soul was immediately spotted in a huge field with binocular vision. Not bad for a non-technophobe, so PDM got back soon enough to complete his qualifying flights? All six entries in this near Wakefield-size class were from long term, battle hardened competitors. The conditions demanded only the best from the very best.

What gets me is that I've been preaching GPS to Longhurst and Michel for about 8 years, then all of a sudden, bingo, they see the light and now I'm expecting them to tell me how wonderful it is. Well, I'll go to the foot of our stairs! Small Rubber on the other hand attracted 24 entries, probably because, a) nearly everybody has got one, and b) they were the best bet to handle the conditions and resist damage. Beal, Foster, Cleasby and Fryer made it into the fly-off finishing in that order, with 4.39 beating 4.02 at the top with a one, two, three take-away for "Hepcat" vs 4th placed "Senator".

Mid-table woes came from two stalwarts. Robin Kimber had a massive fly-away that took his "Jack North" out of sight upwards into the clouds. During my first excursion, I came across him, sat for ages in his car at the edge of the airfield, contemplating a guaranteed fruitless vehicular search for a model which carried no radio location bug, about which he had no compass bearing and absolutely no idea if it had yet landed. Robin used to be undecided, but he thinks he is getting better now!

On the same retrieve I also encountered Martyn Pressnell and his good Lady tramping the fields in three to four minute territory, way beyond his flight time of 2.18 from the first round. Lucky for me because his missus was carrying a forty foot roach pole, which was just what I needed because my "Eager Beaver" was in a four minute tree following a boomer affected DT from a massive height. I snaffled the pole, rescued the Beaver, got back to the flight line, made my second flight and guess what, Martyn was still searching? Either his "RAFF V" got itself stolen or he somehow navigated down the wrong line with a faulty compass bearing. We think it was the former.

GPS and Radio Location took me to within forty feet of my treed Beaver, but this four minute territory was quite arduous particularly the vicious little valley with a sixty foot high tree line on



both topsides and I only eyeballed the model when it slid noisily part way down its lumberland snoozing place. Once de-treed getting back to the flight line was a physical battle between me, my push bike, Martyn's pole and the "Eager Beaver" against the gale force wind. Cream-Crackered, I was, and could not face conventional repairs using tissue and dope so I broke out the drafting tape and fixed all the rips the easy way. Flights two and three were both about 1.40, both trapped in the massive rollover from the upwind valley, both landed off the field

in dense nettles and both undamaged. Ah well! It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good!

So day one ended with me totally unravelled, laying on my caravan bed, stripped and washed, downing a whole two litres of Coke, and falling asleep before repairing to the pub to meet with Michel, Beales, and a matched pair of Farley's to put away a good meal and another couple of litres of Coke. Thirsty is an understatement. Before retiring I tuned in to the morrow's weather forecast. Depression is an ideal word for both the forecast and the effect it had on my brain.

It pee'd with rain most of the night and day two dawned wet and windy. Just the job for an 8 oz Wakefield or better still, a Large Rubber contest! Three hundred square inches of balsa/tissue wing supported on a thirty-six inch long balsa/silk fuselage packing 4 1/2 oz of John Clapp's finest Tan II wound to over 1200 turns. It hardly bore thinking about it. Oh! And the weather forecast was right about the thunder storms too!

In 8 oz Wakefield, eleven souls braved the conditions, again all battle hardened Crazy Rubberbanders, and it was Mike Turner's "Horry" that, again, triumphed over two other fly-off contenders, Mike Kemp's "Blomgren" and Mike Sanderson's KK Gipsy. The "Horry" creamed top prize with 2.41, by nearly a minute from the other two rollover victims. Down amongst the dross two very different anecdotes emerged. J. O'D, our country's most experienced modeller, ever, DT'd his "New Look" on its first flight somewhat early, to record just twenty six seconds. Next, after two mile high maxes from his "Korda", Chris Chapman contrived to launch into a wickedly turbulent gust that gave this most reliable performer absolutely no chance of recovery. Within three seconds Chris had formed his own SAM 1066 splinter group. Several others were to join him.

During this competition, Mike Kemp gave four absolutely faultless displays of radio location retrieval using his brand new "Loc8tor" system. He even clearly demonstrated the range finding capability of this remarkable device whilst his "Blomgren" was still in the air. The "Original" SAM35 Rubberbander and legendary "Rubber Column" author is converted, at last, to radio retrieval! I tell you, at this rate, we are going to run out of Luddites!

In the Under 25" Rubber competition John Godden's "Flying Aces Moth" triumphed by default over the only other full house because, unfortunately, Chris Strachan lost two models downwind, but still on the field, so could not make the fly-off. Thirteen hopeful's made up the entry and the results listing shows just how difficult the conditions were during the day. The best flights were made during a forty minute calm spell following the worst of the thunder storms, late in the day.

No calm luxury for the Large Rubber contingent, this year, the field being cut to just five loonies. To stand a chance one had to be ready at the Get-Go to be sure of making three successful retrieves, let alone three successful flights. Four "Lanzo Sticks" lined up against my lone Bienenstein "Challenger" and despite the conditions, all the qualifying flights were maxes. However, lost or damaged models restricted the fly-off to three full houses. I decided from the off, to run very tight DT's and was rewarded with three beautifully disciplined flights of 2.11, 2.05 and 2.11 all off the

field and all in the jungle. The third flight DT'd down right through the densest sixty-five foot canopy I have ever seen. Even with the radio signal on a 1 inch receiver aerial, coming in so strong, I could not believe the model was actually on the ground embedded and hiding in thick nettles.



What did go un-noticed was some fin damage which later affected "Challenger" in the fly-off, launched into very good air, I had an excellent chance of exacting revenge on Chris Strachan for him beating me at the BMFA Nats, until the glide pattern went missing and the model wandered out of the lift and circled the wrong way to record 3.48 for second place. Chris did nearly a minute more, but landed high up in a copse of very tall trees. The Good, the Bad and the Ugly all in one fly-off. Third place went to Vintage newcomer Ray Elliot whose "Lanzo" stalled all over the sky for just over two minutes. That was the ugly one!



This "Google Earth" image shows the up-wind flight line "Base" and the following arboreal locations:

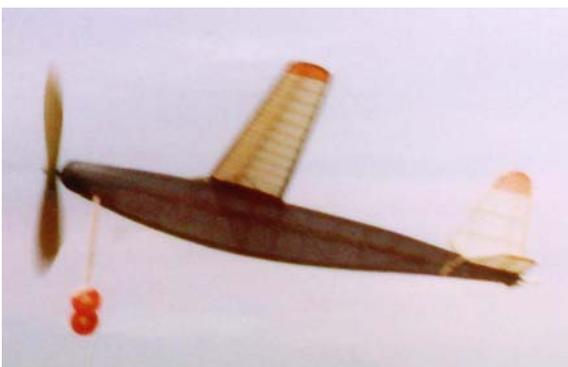
CH RD3 = "Challenger" third flight, through tree canopy landing.

EB RD1 = "Eager Beaver" first flight, treed landing (from day one),

CH F/O = "Challenger" fly-off landing just beyond a sixty foot tree-line.

I was able to pinpoint these landing places on the "Google Earth" image using the actual waypoint latitude and longitude coordinates marked and saved in my hand-held Garmin GPS 12 used for retrieving these flights.

Day three dawned bright and dry and it needed to stay that way to raise the spirits of the gathering participants. The Bournemouth Club Classic CD chose a 2.30 max for these early, open rubber type models, and he was fully justified to anticipate that the wind would not get too strong by the end of the competition. Five from twelve, made it to the fly-off. Two "Trip Sticks" and three "Last Resorts" would vie for top spot, with Foster's 4.43 beating Tyson by a minute. Unlucky Laurie Barr, the designer of the winning "Trip Stick", could not take part due to prior collateral damage.



My plan was to bang in the qualifying flights for 4 oz Wakefield and if there was sufficient time follow that up with an attempt at Vintage Coupe. Well, I got "Mayfly" performing on rails again for three really solid maxes. Running a very long 10 strands of 1/4" Super Sport, three different, once run, motors all took exactly 1600 turns and the ship paddled away in lift for all three flights, all DT'ing safely on the field. No damage and no worries there then? To get the best from its flying surfaces later in the day, I put the

disassembled model back on to its warp prevention jigs to await a probable flyoff.



Now I contemplated my previously fickle “Fuit 3” for Vintage Coupe. I have never made a flyoff with this ship and it has a capricious approach to stability on the glide. Expressed another way, it hasn’t got a clue! So, this day, it behaves itself big-time and zoomed away from three perfect javelin launches to settle into faultless glides and a solid place in a second flyoff. Only two flyers made the grade. It was to be a shootout between J. O’D’s “Jump Bis” and my belatedly transformed “Fuit 3”. This was a representative finale as these two designs made up nine out of the seventeen entries.

I used ten strands of 1/8” Tan II and found that they were taking just shy of five hundred and sixty turns on a brand new motor. Being inexperienced at Coupe flying, it seems like a black art trying to wind a new motor to near destruction every time. To aid the process, I ensure my Soap/Glycerine lubricant is pretty wet, the notion being

that because rubber is porous, when the pores are opened up by stretching then my watery lube can enter the microstructure of the rubber. This way I feel I am getting internal and external lubrication from the same process. I am also learning not to allow any slackening; the motor must always pull me in towards the model. Thus when the hook disappears within the nose and I cannot pull it back out, then that has to be top dollar. It’s a pretty scary approach but at least I get the satisfaction that I can’t get any more turns on that pesky, glistening ten gram rubber band.

In the meantime, back in 4 oz Wakefield, five more flyers took advantage of the relatively benign conditions and fairly easy max to make it a six way final from the fourteen entries. All the qualifying flyers have been here before and there was no ROG this year. Easy Peasy, Right?! Ha! Ha! Ha! To complicate matters I was the only flyer to reach two fly-offs and this put the organizers into a tiz because they wanted to get the finals over quickly to enable them to get on with the extended (three day) presentation ceremony which was now being threatened by forecast showers.

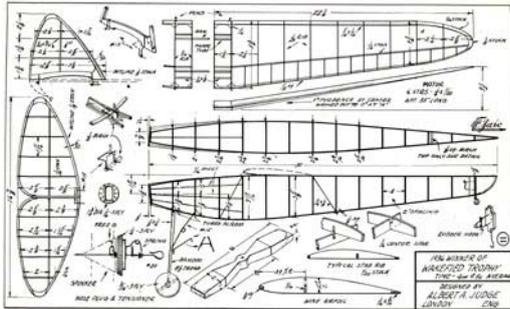
Pressure! What pressure? I was physically and mentally drained from three days of intense activity, particularly the retrieving. 4 oz Wake was due off first and my brain dead concentration forgot to stop winding at 1600 turns. The motor broke at 1647, luckily at the rear peg and it whizzed past me at 100mph just missing the crown jewels and lay there wriggling in the grass like a demented snake. The motor, that is, not the crown jewels. Now I find the replacement motor has a broken strand so I un-wrapped a new one only to find it has two extra strands and will surely generate too much torque on full chat. I backed off some turns but it was still too much. With time running out I simply forgot to add an empirical amount of right side thrust at the nose block to turn “Mayfly” off the top of the inevitable power stall. Guess what? It stalled all the way up and to add insult to injury, stalled all the way down for 2.02 and equal fifth. What a cock-up! It was so bad, I even apologised to Nick Farley, my time keeper. Weird or Wot? Never mind, “Mayfly” was totally innocent of these shenanigans, it being a gross case of pilot error. Ever had pilot error? Dun it make y’ mad?

Mad is a good metaphor for how I was feeling with the Coupe fly-off imminent, and no time to collect one’s sanity either. At least the ten grams of once used rubber did not burst, now taking six hundred glistening turns and got hooked to the prop all without incident. I definitely detected the lift but did not wait long enough for the gust and went just too early. “Fuit 3” swooped sideways off the top of its javelin departure and fell straight into the accompanying hole. It was lucky to do 1.08

given this second cock-up in the space of ten minutes. The “Jump Bis” went soon after and easily doubled my score.

Once I had gathered my senses from this double jeopardy, it transpired that Strachan’s “Copland” would triumph again in 4 oz Wakefield, with 3.57 ahead of Wingate and Godden sporting their “Northern Arrow” and “Leshner” for 3.51 and 3.11 respectively.

Wrapped up within the package of the 4 oz competition was the 70th anniversary commemoration of Mr. A.A. Judge’s win in the 1936 Wakefield World Championships held in Detroit. The rules were practically incomprehensible, but in essence, flyers could get extra points for flying a replica of any ship taking part in the 1936 competition, and for launching ROG, and for being 70, 80 or 90 years old and for being a former world champion. Clear as mud, right? What really mattered however was



that the great man, Albert Judge himself was present and flew his own replica model to good effect. He was, however, employing fetcher-mites as necessary to conserve his ancient legs, and why not? Here was a history lesson in real time. He even won the battle of the “Judge” replicas from Messer’s Turner, Michel and Beales. What more fitting contribution could there be from these three modern artisans than to bow gracefully before the 1936 Master of the Universe? And yet, the

world continues to turn, so despite the fact that Albert Judge will always be the 1936 Champion, the villain of this weekend was that awful wind that dominated the first two days of competition and the ultimate heroes at The Little Rissington SAM Eurochamps in 2006 were every single modeller who dared to shout at the wind.

The presentation ceremony covered all three days with an impressive array of plaques and silverware to dish out. All the winners and runner’s up were cheered to the last hurrah, mostly I believe, in mutual admiration not just for winning but for their fortitude in sticking to the task during the very difficult conditions of the first two days. Even the non-winners were champion. Everyone present was also delighted to see the founder of these SAM1066 Euro Championships, David Baker, in attendance and actively involved in the prize giving.

Our other heroes were Mike Parker and all his dedicated helpers, without whose core contribution, this event could not have taken place. His volunteers took control of the camp-site, manning the gate, signposting, et al, and a very well organised event control centre where the results were expertly coordinated by a team of faithful wives and daughters. Mike also had a large team of individual event CD’s who were available as required for setting the rules on the day and for consultation and advice, during their particular event.

Following our trials and tribulations, a small team of organisers and participants conducted a shake-down meeting at the end of the third day. Without a considerable seed change regarding venue availability and event managing, it is becoming increasingly difficult to stage these championships. Hopefully, time will bring clarity to these two uncertainties and to the future of this traditional three day event. In the meantime those who attended may reflect on their participation as continued dedication to the preservation of vintage model aircraft. Long may it endure!

Ramon

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