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Race fans descend on Reno

By Mike Collins



*Mechanics work on the engine of Jimmy Leeward's P-51 Mustang, Galloping Ghost.
Photos by Robert Fisher*

Air racers, and air racing enthusiasts, have been arriving in Reno, Nev., for the forty-seventh annual [National Championship Air Races](#). The races officially began Sept. 15, with a qualifying period and heat races.

Reno features racing by six classes of aircraft. The fastest, in the Unlimited and Jet classes, reach speeds of more than 500 mph. The event also boasts a large static aircraft display. Race events continue until the Unlimited championship race on Sunday afternoon.

Daily airshows, featuring the Canadian Forces' Snowbirds demonstration team, Kent Pietsch, David Martin, Greg Poe, and others—as well as military flight demonstrations—also are on the schedule.

[Reno/Stead Airport](#) is closed to transient traffic during the races. Pilots planning flights in the area should anticipate temporary flight restrictions.



This is what's left of the prop hub of Relentless, after the NXT lost its prop in qualification flying Tuesday.

John Zayac of Centennial, Colo., pilot of the *McDonald Racer #37*—and a 10-year veteran of the air races at Reno—has set a high mark for his performance this year. After winning first place in the T-6 Bronze Class in 2003, he advanced through the T-6 Silver Class and currently races in the highly competitive T-6 Gold Class—which he hopes to win this year. “Our three major goals for 2010 Reno Air Races are to promote children interested in aviation, break and maintain the T-6 air racing speed record, and to win first place in the T-6 Gold,” he said.

Zayac and his crew may have some tweaking to do. Nick Macy set a Reno record during qualifications on Sept. 14 in his T-6, *Six-Cat*, which was clocked at 244.539 mph. That beat the previous record, 243.083 mph, which was set in 2008. Zayac placed third in the qualifications, with a speed of 233.444 mph.

Also on Sept. 14, Kevin Eldredge of San Luis Obispo, Calif., flying his NXT, *Relentless*, lost his propeller during Super Sport qualification flying. In spite of that, and the resulting engine damage, Eldredge landed safely.

If you want to follow the races but cannot attend, a daily podcast and updated results are available on the [National Championship Air Races website](#).