



## Victory for a Champion—45th Annual National Championship Air Races

Oct '08

By Victor G. Archer

During the 45th Annual National Championship Air Races, held Sept. 10-14 at Stead Airport (K4SD) in Reno, Nev., Bill "Tiger" Destefani created the perfect end for his long racing career—his seventh championship. Destefani, from Bakersfield, Calif., flew his highly modified P-51 Mustang, Strega, to victory in Sunday's Breitling Unlimited Gold Class race, with an average speed of 483 mph. This was Destefani's first Gold Championship since 1997; he previously won the title in 1987, 1992, 1993, 1995 and 1996.

"It's been a long time coming," Destefani said Sunday as he was surrounded by a large group of media and racing fans. "It was just a great ride."

Destefani said this was the last year he will be racing, but Strega will return with a new pilot at the controls.

The Unlimited Gold Race itself was one of the best races in many years.

Michael Brown, in September Fury, a Hawker Sea Fury, had the lead on the track but Dan Martin, piloting a P-51 Mustang, Dago Red, got around him right away. Meanwhile, Destefani took a high line and also quickly got past Brown, with John Penney, flying the F8F Bearcat Rare Bear trailing close behind in fourth. Martin, flying low, was passed by Destefani; Penney was about to pass Brown when he had a catastrophic engine failure and had to call mayday. Penney made a safe landing, but unfortunately, he didn't finish the race.

The official finishing order was, first through ninth, Destefani, 483.062 mph; Martin, 474.305 mph; Brown, 473.816 mph; Sherman Smoot flying the Yak 11 Czech Mate, 424.517 mph; Stewart Dawson, Spirit of Texas (Hawker Sea Fury), 418.746 mph; Nelson Ezell, Fury (Hawker Sea Fury), 414.834 mph; Ray Dieckman, Sawbones (Hawker Sea Fury), 407.905 mph; Howard Pardue, Bearcat (Grumman F8F Bearcat), 402.608 mph; and Penney.

### Unlimited Silver

Dan Vance won the Unlimited Silver race, flying September Pops, a Hawker Sea Fury, with a speed of 407.457 mph, just ahead of Brent Hisey in the P-51 Miss America. Will Whiteside finished third in Steadfast, a Yak 3U, followed by Michael Brown in the Grumman F7F Tigercat Big Bossman and Robert Odegaard in Super Corsair, a Goodyear F2G Corsair—the same aircraft that the late Cook Cleland raced in the 1940s Cleveland Air Races. Rounding out the field in sixth through eighth place were Fred Cabanas in the P-51 American Beauty, Stu Eberhardt in the P-51 Merlin's Magic and Robert Patterson in Lady Jo, a TF-51.

### Unlimited Bronze

Will Whiteside, piloting Bob Button's Mustang, Voodoo, won the Unlimited Bronze race, with a speed of 371.719 mph. Whiteside hoped to race Voodoo in the Gold race, but the team had to replace its race-prepped motor with a stock motor, putting them back in the Bronze.

Doug Matthews, flying The Rebel, finished second, and 21-year-old Steven Hinton Jr., in the Jelly Belly-sponsored Mustang, Sparky, finished third, becoming the youngest pilot ever to race at the Reno National Air Races.

### Sport and SuperSport

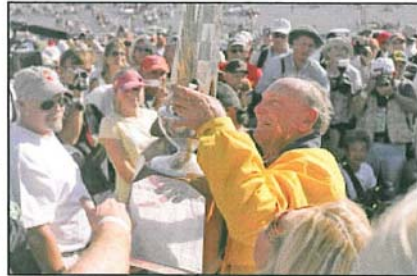


Photo By Victor G. Archer

Bill "Tiger" Destefani receives the Unlimited Gold Trophy. This was the seventh time Destefani won the National Championship.



Photo By Victor G. Archer

In Strega, his highly modified P-51 Mustang, Bill "Tiger" Destefani clocked an average speed of 483 mph to win the Breitling Unlimited Gold Class race.

Lee Behel won the Sport Gold race flying *Breathless*, a Lancair Legacy, with a speed of 335.464 mph. Gary Mead finished in second in *Lucky Mojo*, a Glasair 111, followed by Tom McReynolds in the Lancair Legacy Poky.

Tony Crawford won the Sport Silver race flying a Questair Venture, *Chick's Delight*, with a speed of 282.130 mph, followed by Dave Morss piloting *Martin's Legacy* and Jim Vitale in *Sugar Plum*, a Swearingen SX300.

The SuperSport class racers are allowed to use specially blended fuels and/or additives. Jon Sharp, piloting *Nemesis (NXT)*, shattered the qualifying record by more than 20 mph with a new speed of 409.297 mph. He also set a new race record speed of 393.220 mph, and went on to win the SuperSport Gold race. Mike Dacey, who flew a Questair Venture, finished second, followed by Lynn Farnsworth in *Miss Karen (Lancair Legacy)* in third. Fourth through eighth place winners were Rod von Grote (*Lancair Legacy*); Kevin Eldredge, *Relentless (NXT)*; Behel, *Breathless*; Mead, *Lucky Mojo*; and George Giboney, *Rapid Travel (Thunder Mustang)*.

**T-6 class**

Two new speed records were set in the T-6 class this year. During qualifying, Nick Macy, flying *Six-Cat*, set a new top speed of 243.083 mph. The previous record was 239.398, set in 2003. Ken Dwelle set a new race record speed at 244.523 mph in *Tinkertoy*, breaking the previous record of 239.865 mph. Both of these speed records are impressive, considering that the T-6 had an original top speed rating of 208 mph, and all of the aircraft in this class are supposed to be in stock configuration.

Dwelle won the Gold race with a speed of 244.523 mph. Alfred Goss, flying *Warlock*, finished second with a speed of 237.855mph, and John Zayac, in the *McDonald Racer*, finished third. Fourth went to Gene McNeeley flying *Undecided*, followed by Fred Telling in *Baby Boomer* and Carter Clark in *Midnight Miss III*. Top Qualifier Macy broke a prop shaft and made an emergency landing, putting him out of the race.

John Lohmar won Silver, flying *Radial Velocity*, with a speed of 224.101 mph, followed by Ken Gottschall, in *Grace 8*, and Jim Good in *Wyoming Wildcatter*.

John Krawczyk won Bronze, piloting *Abracadabra*, with a speed of 214.984 mph, barely ahead of Adrianus Clermont in *Midnight Express*, with a speed of 214.942 mph. Vic McMann finished in third flying *Gunslinger*.



Photo By Victor G. Archer

Dan Martin flew the highly modified P-51 Mustang, *Dago Red*, to second place in the Unlimited Gold race.

**Biplane class**

Tom Aberle set a new Gold race record speed of 251.975 mph, flying his highly modified Mong Sport aircraft, *Phantom*, on his way to a first place finish. Norman Way came in second, piloting *Magic*, a Pitts S-1S, with a speed of 213.156 mph—almost 40 mph slower than Aberle! Dennis Vest finished third in a Pitts S-1C, *Drag Racer*. Leah Sommer, one of three women competing in the class, finished fourth, flying *Son of Galloping Goat*, a Pitts S-1S. In fifth through eighth place, all flying Pitts S-1S aircraft, were David Roelfs, *Purse Snatcher*; Tony Higa, *Tango-Tango*; Kirk Murphy, *Lady Luck*; and Cris Ferguson, *Let The Good Times Roll*.

George Andre won the Silver race, flying a Pitts, *Zippitts*, with a speed of 186.469 mph. Jeff Lo came in second piloting *Miss Dianne*, a Pitts S-1S, and Mark Barber came in third in *Shortcut*, a Pitts S-1C. Fourth through eighth finishers were Richard Beardsley, *Rich's Brew (Smith Mini DSA-1)*; Mick Mathewson, *Milk Run (Pitts S-1S)*; Casey Erickson, the *Bat Plane*; Leah Sommer, *Blue Sky (Pitts S-1S)*; and Marilyn Dash, *Ruby (Pitts S-1S)*.

**Formula One class**

Steve Senegal won the Formula One Gold race with a speed of 246.119 mph, piloting *Endeavor*, David Hoover's *AR-6*. Gary Davis was a close second in *Cassutt Scarlet Screamer*, with a speed of 239.332 mph. Another Cassutt, *Yellow Peril*, flown by Doug Bodine, was third. Taking fourth through seventh was *Smokey Young, Sly Dog (Wagner Western)*; Steve Temple, *Madness (GR-7 Panther)*; Jay Jones, *Quadnickel (Cassutt)*; and Thom Richard, *Miss USA (Cassutt)*.

Three Cassutts finished in the top spots in the Silver Race. Carl Swenson Jr. won flying *Annie*, with a speed of 218.522 mph. Bill Garrison, piloting *Dancing Queen*, managed to finish just ahead of John Hall, in *What's Up Doc*. The two aircraft were less than a half second apart as they crossed the finish line. Brian Reberry, piloting *N-A-Rush*, came in fourth, while fifth and sixth place Cassutts, Tom Watkins in *Lime Light* and Greg Jaspers in *Crown Jewel*, were about a second apart. Michael Kenner finished seventh in the *Cassutt Blackjack* and



Photo By Victor G. Archer

Michael Brown, in his race modified Hawker Sea Fury *September Fury*, looked like he might have had the fastest racer all week.



Elliot Seguin, in his first race, came in eighth in Wasabi, also a Cassutt.

until both Mustangs passed him during Sunday's final Gold race. Brown finished in third.

**Jet class**

Former space shuttle commander Curt Brown, piloting Viper, an L-29 Delphin, won over aerobatic champion Mike Mangold in Euro B...er, also an L-29, with a speed of 510.282 mph, which broke the 2007 record by nearly 19 mph. Joe Gano finished third in the L-39 Pip Squeak. Finishing fourth through eighth were Phil Fogg, Race 8 (L-39); Rick Vandam, American Spirit (L-39); Lee Behel, Fuga (Fuga Magister); former astronaut "Hoot" Gibson, Robin 1 (L-39); and Cliff Magee, Violated (L-39).

Sunday was also highlighted by the final performance of the F-22 Raptor, the world's most advanced military aircraft, at the Reno Air Races. The F-22 Raptor, designed for stealthy air-to-air combat, is the newest addition to the U.S. Air Force's military fleet. The F-22 Raptor Demonstration Team is stationed in Langley, Va.; the Reno Air Races is only one of 26 places that the team will perform this year.??

The Reno National Championship Air Races are considered to be the longest running air race in the world and the only place where you can see, up close and personal, five days of air racing by six classes of aircraft, some reaching speeds of more than 500 mph. The event also includes a world-class air show featuring top aerobatic performers and military and civil flight demonstrations, and a large display of static aircraft.

In addition to all of the flying, you can visit the pits and watch race teams work on their aircraft, browse any of the many vendors booths and enjoy a wide variety of food and beverages and other amenities.

The 46th Annual National Championship Air Races will be held Sept. 16 - 20, 2009.

For more information, visit [<http://www.airrace.org>].

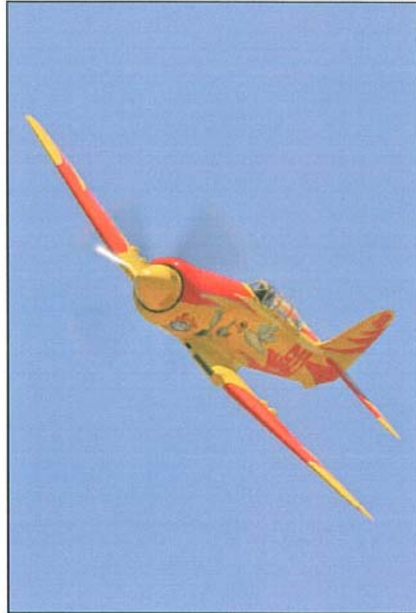


Photo By Victor G. Archer

Dan Vanca, flying Michael Brown's Hawker Sea Fury, September Pops, won Sunday's Unlimited Silver race.



Photo By Andy Annable



Photo By Andy Annable