Held on Sunday 5th September at the Knebworth MFC site in Hertfordshire, the big question concerning the fifth annual running of this event was how it would measure up to the 2003 Championships, which were a huge success. As it turned out, such was the interest this year that no fewer than three similar freestyle events took place around the UK, one informal and two judged. The fact that more competitions are occurring is an indication of the current preferences of model flyers - pilots are enthusiastic to learn this new aerobatic discipline, which has such great spectator appeal.

On the run-up to this year's comp. there were a couple of issues causing some concern. First, if there were a larger number of entries than expected it would be difficult to allow every pilot to make the required number of flights (3), and there was a worry that the new fixed programme would aggravate pilots who'd previously only known total freestyle. Sure enough a few pilots did make their feelings known, some quite early on in the season, but worryingly those same concerns were still being voiced as the event date approached. With this being the case there was a real possibility of having to drop the new fixed programme in its entirety, which would have been a shame because we really wanted to test the potential of this new format. Despite our fears the number of entries eventually reached the ideal amount to run three flights in one day. The objective would be fulfilled after all!

WEATHER WITH YOU
The one thing that's beyond the powers of the organising committee is, of course, the British weather! The summer of 2004 was somewhat unsettled, with every chance of the first week in September following the same pattern. Yet as Sunday 5th drew nearer the conditions were set fair, so we were looking good for a dry day. And so it was, with temperatures hovering around the 30°C mark; together with very little breeze this allowed the pilots an opportunity to strut their stuff in near perfect conditions.

FIXED SCHEDULE
The controversial fixed programme was scheduled for the first round of flights - the main reason for this was to get the ‘traumatic’ part over and done with as far as the pilots were concerned, but it also gave me time to solicit their opinion as to the credibility of this new programme. There were no crashes and surprisingly all pilots in both classes coped extremely well, despite their unfamiliarity with the more
precision-orientated type of flying. Some pilots were quite nervous of the fixed programme, although the judges appeared to find it rather appealing; possibly the novelty or (more probably) the change of flight style was a welcome change.

No peace for the wicked, and indeed the workload for this event was higher than ever before, for both myself and the large number of assisting individuals. Expectations were also higher than ever, spectators anticipating some top-drawer performances by the gathered pilots. The stage was set; this day would prove whether or not we could produce a more professional event that would benefit all involved.

3D, NOT F3A
Cast an eye around the freestyle arena and it’s plain to see that F3A designs are not the preferred option for the discipline. The fact that 3D designs are considerably less expensive than comparable F3A types makes the decision far easier!

The most popular design seen at this year’s event was undoubtedly Malcolm Corbin’s Capiche. Malcolm has done a great job in producing a really successful design that’s available in a variety of sizes and packages to suit almost any budget. Regardless of size, the Capiche is a superb 3D ship.

The Funtana is a fine alternative, particularly for those who prefer something distinctively different. It’s just as capable as the Capiche, particularly in the well-practiced hands of Nathan Farrell-Jones.

Of the ‘older’ top designs, the Majestic remains an excellent choice - still very competitive, and as it’s no longer from the current crop of up-to-date designs, it might just be possible to acquire one at a knockdown price if you shop around.

At one point in the competition Nathan Farrell-Jones was threatening to lead the Unlimited class. As you might expect he has fearless control over his Funtana S.

RCM&E, MacGregor Industries, Weston UK and YT International donated a superb array of prizes that amounted to well over £700.

The Synergy 90 is the model of choice for this year’s winner of the Advanced class, Paul Camilleri.

When it comes to showing no fear, very few are as cool as Ali Machinchy who wrung out his monster Yak with total confidence.
Ali Machinchy used more than one model to good effect. Ali's last freestyle flight saw him use a 'monster' Yak 55SP, which is approaching half scale! This beast performed superbly, and despite its size the flight was neatly contained within the restricted confines of the flying area. The Yak incorporated an excellent smoke system and in all probability this potent combination may well have tempted the judges to award those few extra points.

Whilst 3D airframes dominate freestyle, engines are following F3A almost to the letter. The four-stroke YS easily outnumbers all other powerplants, most popular capacities at this year's Championships being 1.20 or 1.40 though some smaller examples were witnessed, performing all that their pilots asked of them.

The most obvious and spectacular exception to the general rule was the Capiche Electric flown by Dave Stephens in two of the rounds. This 2 metre electric version of the popular design was really impressive - truly inspiring and graceful in Dave's capable hands.

JUDGEMENT DAY

The judges sat in the heat for almost 40 flights: Andy Nicholls, now in his fourth year of judging freestyle, was once one of the UK's best F3A pilots and is now totally hooked on 3D.

Bob's certainly in demand, having also recently judged the Artistic Aeros in France and the F3A Euro Champs in Portugal. But have we managed to tempt him back for our 2005 Freestyle comp? You bet - he's already reserved his seat.

Luke Shaw was another who campaigned the popular Capiche 140 in the Unlimited class.

Victors with their spoils: Paul Camilleri and Ali Machinchy. Want to win a trophy next year? Then these are the guys to beat.

Incidentally, since Ali has now won the coveted Freestyle trophy for three years on the trot, he get to keep it, and that means there'll be a new one up for grabs in 2005.

Table: 2004 RCM&E British Freestyle Championships

<table>
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<th>Advanced Class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ali Machinchy</td>
<td>Paul Camilleri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dave Stephens</td>
<td>Andrew Maker</td>
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<td>Nathan Farrell-Jones</td>
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Finally, as the man who held the logistics of the event together, John Mee deserves special mention, for truly, the day wouldn’t have been as slick without his attention to detail.

**TABLE TOPPING**

Undeterred by the introduction of the fixed programme, some new names appeared in the frame this year, particularly in the Advanced class. Paul Camilleri, (who placed third in 2003) eventually emerged as this year’s victor after a close battle with new boy Andrew Maker. Both have a natural talent for the discipline and we sincerely hope to see them again next year... possibly flying in the Unlimited class!

**WHEN ALL’S SAID AND DONE...**

The 2004 event proved that there’s always something just around the corner to catch out the unwary Contest Director. Despite a year of planning and the most experienced team of organisers, 100% success seems very elusive. But then I guess my F3A upbringing demands perfection; I should learn to be a little more patient. In the final analysis all objectives were met - pilots, spectators and even judges were more satisfied with this year’s format.

The flight to music was outstandingly popular with everyone attending; not so easy for the pilots to choreograph mind you, but the job was made just that little bit easier by our super soundman, Darren Hughes. Although music is certainly the way to go it’s not usually practical to have a sound system available whilst practicing, so some consideration will have to be given to this aspect when finalising any new future format. Indeed some new ideas for next year’s event have already been

**FREESTYLE AEROBATICS**

Two small fellers with huge potential - Kane (standing) and Adam Woodley made the day for many with their youthful enthusiasm and unquestioned control of their matching Capiche 140s. Good to see!

If you want to compete at next year’s event you could do a lot worse than equip yourself with an Adrenaline from YT International. This was another very popular model at the event flown by many of the top pilots including Mr Machinchy during his ‘set manoeuvre’ round.
Those who fly serious freestyle aerobatics have grown to love the Capriche 140 for a variety of reasons, not least of which is cost and performance.

suggested - there may be another change of format or some fine-tuning of that which currently exists.

Looking skyward admiring the figures cut by this year’s piloting contingent, my main regret was that I neither had the time nor the opportunity to comply with the request of many competitors to extract one of my F3A models from storage and demonstrate the new fixed programme. Just a few hours would have been sufficient to shake off the dust and provide a reasonable display, but such is the life of a hardworking CD, those few hours were never available.

These past three years have seen a great deal of change in freestyle aerobatics; progress indeed. The success of this event was due in no small way to the boys at Carbon Copy and the Knebworth club who, once again, invited us to use their facility. Next year, however, the space we now require dictates that we must move on, so if there are any interested MFCs out there that believe they could accommodate future RCM&E Freestyle Championships, please contact me via RCM&E, alternatively e-mail to: freestyleaeros@yahoo.co.uk

For more details and pictures, log on to: freestylercaerobatics.ournet.co.uk

Special thanks to the following for their sterling efforts in making the 2004 RCM&E British Freestyle Championships a true success:

Judges: Andy Nicholls, Peter Brett & Bob Ailles
Admin and logistics: John Mee
Scores: Darren Mee, Martin Smith & Mike Smith
Tx control: Alan Simmonds
Flightline control: David Tappin
Sound system: Darren Hughes
Website: John Mee
Event sponsor: RCM&E - for its continued support with promotions, logistics, prizes and refreshments.
Prize sponsors: YT International, MacGregor Industries, Weston UK, RCM&E

Terry Westrop

COMING IN THE FEBRUARY ISSUE

REVIEW
● Addicted to diesel engines? Having trouble quitting? Brian Winch tests the Enya 15 R/C and offers a cure for cold turkey.
● ProTech Zoom 400 - AJ White gets a hankering for a heli
● Funtana 40S - Looking for an extreme aerobat? Don’t miss our full, unbiased review of the Hangar 9 3D machine.
● Magister trainer - Yes folks, Multiplex have taken a block of Eapor foam and have carved it into a half decent looking trainer. But is it durable, how does it fly, and is it really a practical glow engine mount? Graham Ashby checks it out.

FEATURES
● The flying boat interest continues as David Stevens takes Die Fledermaus for a swim.
● A Hitchhiker’s Guide - Forget hills and hand-launching, says Simon Cocker, let a tug ‘plane take the strain.
● To ‘L’ with Helicopters - update on the Graupner Bolkow build.

PLANS
● Zero Fun - No, that doesn’t mean it’s no fun, in fact Mike Parry’s 25-size Japanese fun-fighter is quite the opposite. Why not build your own from our FREE pro-plan.

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