

# THE 2010 US NATS.



*After an eight year gap, Paul Winter and John Benzing paid a return visit to the US Nats.*

*Paul writes.....*So why do we bother? To do what.....go to international comps. Because we can! And so this time it's the US Nationals held in Muncie in the state of Indiana. After 45 years of flying model aeroplanes I still have the enthusiasm to want to travel to other parts of the world to fly my toy aeroplanes. Last time we went to Muncie was 8 years ago, and that time both John Benzing and I flew into Chicago and then made the three and a half hour drive down to the AMA (Academy of Model Aeronautics) headquarters on the outskirts of Muncie. If you revert back to earlier model press articles you can read about our adventures on other US trips.

This time (July 2010), as it's the year of my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, JB and I opted to fly premium class, which apart from giving us really comfortable seats, also gives us 92 kgs of baggage allowance between the two of us (at least it does if you fly with Virgin), an important consideration when the model box on its own weighs 27kg!

JB was not flying his model this year (getting too old he reckons!) which in some ways meant our journey would be easier. Our arrival at Heathrow at 06.30 hours found the Virgin desk manned but with no queuing customers. First surprise we discovered was that if we classed the model box as sports equipment (well competitive model aircraft flying is a sport surely), then it would travel for FREE – provided it was less than 32kg in weight (which it was). The box was then whisked away without any questions or problems. Amazing. This was all too easy!

The model I was using on this trip was my well-travelled 'Strega' (pictured at right).



This is a four piece take-apart primarily designed to fit in a box that can comfortably go through the airport scanners (they can only accommodate a maximum size of 32" x 32", but any length). Eight hours later we arrived at Chicago airport (still only Saturday afternoon of course as the US is eight hours behind UK time) and lo and behold the box was waiting for us and in pristine condition. Our pre-booked hire car was also ready and waiting so we set off on the three and a half hour drive to Muncie.

On arrival at our Motel the first person to greet us was Bob Krug from Powermaster Fuels. Bob had kindly gone to the trouble to personally deliver the gallon of special mix fuel that had been pre-ordered from the UK prior to our departure. On previous visits to the US, getting the right fuel mix had always been a problem, but this time, using my big Saito four-stroke, I'd decided that the solution would be to have my usual 60% methanol and 20% of Klotz, but to up the nitro from 10% to 20%. But was it going to work?

On Monday we had Appearance judging in a gym just up the road from the hotel. As from previous reports you will know that you are given between 10 and 20 points for the quality of finish on your plane and how it looks from a distance. These marks are added onto your score for each flight, and in previous years it has often decided the final outcome of the competition. A perfect plane gets 20 (and there are very few in the history of the Nats to get 20), but this year there was a 20 pointer which was awarded to Jim Aron for his amazing 'Systemra' (see photo at right).



My hard work on 'Strega' paid off and I was awarded 18 points, the highest (I think) ever given to a non-American flyer.

Whilst appearance judging was going on we had a pilots meeting. In previous years all we seemed to talk about was a whole load of c\*\*p. This year however things were different, as there was none of that and instead we did a draw which arranged our flying orders. We all picked balls from a bag numbered one to ten and the others picked 11 to 20, then we swapped; so you had an early flight and a later flight, then we picked circles. The beauty of this system is that nobody could complain about their particular slot as they had drawn it themselves!

Wednesday was the first day of competition and I had drawn the short straw and was scheduled to fly first in my group. It paid off, because like all high altitude areas (600 feet above sea level) and humidity (90%) and bar pressure in the 3500 (very high), the day starts well and then the wind picks up by about lunch time. Also, the first flight tends to set a bench mark in the judges mind for the following flyers. I flew my first flight and got a 474.67, which equates to about a 950 in England (remember that in the US they score out of 40).

# The US Nats - July 2010



The amazing display of models for Appearance judging

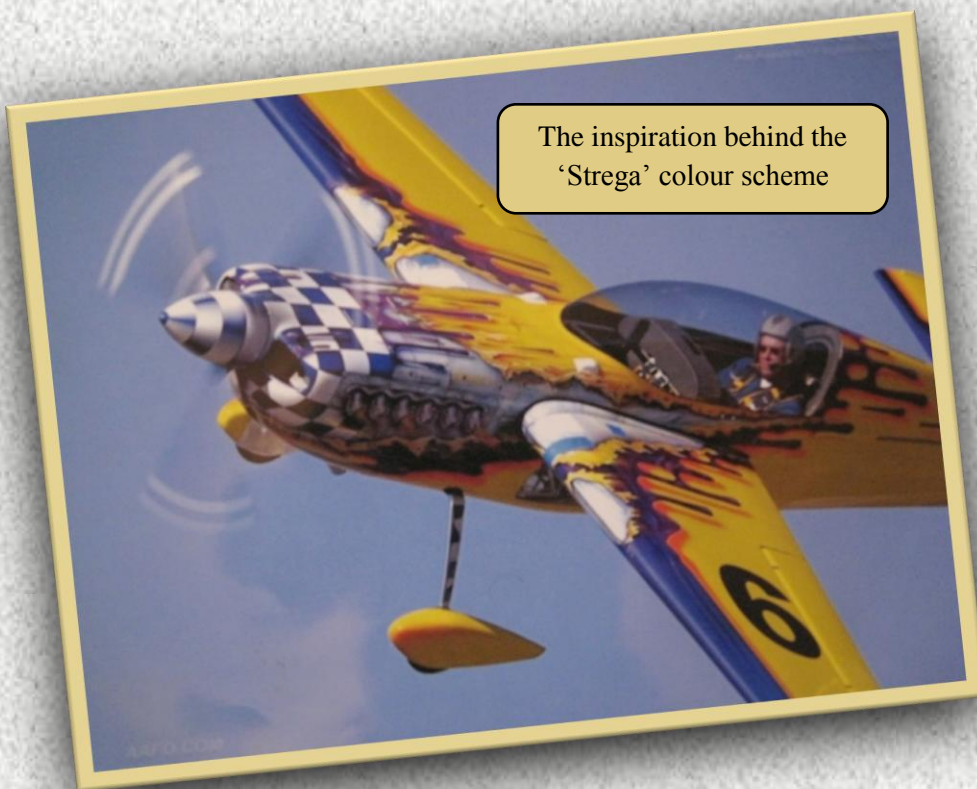


Paul takes the 20kg pull test at 7.30 in the morning!



Richard Oliver – guess what engine he's using?

Background photo – sunset over Muncie



The inspiration behind the 'Strega' colour scheme

It's worth explaining that in the US there are four levels of expertise – Beginners, Intermediate, Advanced and Expert. As I do not classify myself as an Expert (this would equate in the UK to a Team level flyer), I opted to enter the Advanced category. Watching other flyers both in practice and in the competition at this level, JB and I picked out two or three flyers that seemed a cut above the rest, and sure enough in the end one that we had picked out won the Advanced competition.

As you only fly twice each day, once in each circle, I was fortunate (or lucky) enough to get an early morning draw which meant there was plenty of time for score-board watching.

The scores in Advanced were all around the 400 to 460 mark and only one or two in the 470's, so by the end of the first day I was comfortably placed to qualify for the top twenty Fly-Off.

Day two and I had another good draw and flew in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> position, but as I got a good enough score after my first flight and two good ones from the previous day, I decided to pass on my second flight – no point in wearing the plane out, and in any case the wind had got up a bit. I think I qualified in 4<sup>th</sup> position.

Top twenty day and we all picked our flying orders again. This time I had the 4<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> slots. I flew well enough for the judge to shout out 'nice flight' after my second flight (perhaps he says that to everyone!), but nonetheless it got me 505 points which was enough to take me into the lead and I was there until the very last score went up when I dropped a place.

Boy was I relieved to come second, you may say WHY, well it's because if you win Advanced you automatically move up to the next class (Expert), which means I would have started right at the bottom again. Also in the Expert class the competition is intense, with everyone focussed on winning. This is not my style, I go to the US Nats for the camaraderie and social interaction with other flyers, and I'm sure that once in Expert this would all change.

So now it was time to sit back and watch the big boys fight it out for the Walker Cup. Friday and Saturday is when this happens, with Saturday reserved for the top 5 Fly-Off. In the end Billy Werwage came out in top place, and he has done so every decade for the last seven. Saturday night there was the banquet and prize giving, lots of pats on the back for each other. I collected my second place trophy that will get pride of place in my house.

So what impressions did we come back with? Well it's eight years since we last participated in the US Nats so everyone is that much older and they all seemed to have mellowed somewhat. Gone is the 'stand-offish' attitude that we sensed with some of the flyers on previous visits. Now everyone talks to everyone else without any sort of attitude both on the field and socially. That's evidently what age does for you!

If you're interested in learning more about our US Nats experience then why not watch the 15 minute movie that we made of our trip? And it's not just about us, but a complete overview of the Nats experience that YOU could live. Just go to the CLAPA website ([www.clapa.org](http://www.clapa.org)) and from the page that appears click the small green box below the group photo that says 'US Nationals 2010'. When the movie starts to play click the small group of arrows in the bottom right corner of the small screen to get a full screen version. And remember to keep the sound up nice and loud!

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Above – Socialising! L to R:  
Rich Giacobone and  
John D'Ottavio

Above – Socialising! L to R:  
Jason and Shannon Greer,  
John B and Paul W.



Right: Paul Walker (left) presents  
the Walker Cup to Bill Werwage

All photos by John B.  
(except top right)



Jason Greer's electric model – all  
components from [www.rcdude.com](http://www.rcdude.com)



All pals together! Kenneth 'Sleepy'  
Dawson and Paul Winter