

RAND AIR SHOW 23 MAY 2010

Although there is no significant SAAF participation, the Rand Air Show still draws enough crowds to qualify as one of the major air shows on the Gauteng Air Show circuit. Our usual sunny skies play a big role in making it a huge success.

Organising this event did not occur without the participation of various organisations. There is a new company, Recreation Aviation Administration of South Africa (RAASA) that is going to co-ordinate all displays, license the air shows, and accredit the display pilots. This also includes accrediting the media. Shaun Melass usually organised us in his highly efficient and easy approachable style. He did the initial work but was pulled from his post about two days before this show. I was greatly surprised to be told “the SAAF is not a recognised publisher” and my name was removed from the media list. Sanity and wisdom prevailed and Pierre Loubscher from RAASA allowed me in after a friend of mine vouched for my credentials. Although there was no official SAAF participation (except for the Silver Falcons) many ex-SAAF pilots and aircraft did display.

The Harvards started the show in mid morning with a mass radial formation that turned into a wonderful circus of Harvards flying across the sky.



The flying Lions showed off their relatively new livery. The BP Altima Logo is now filling the top wings and blue lines flow down the fuselage. These colours still stand out starkly against the blue skies and must be one of the best ways to advertise a brand .



The Gabriel Pitts flown by Scully Levin, Ellis Levin, Arnie Meneghelli and Stu Lithgow, displayed three aircraft in white and red with one in red and black. My photos show two manoeuvres and one from the side to show the effect of one dissimilar colour in a formation.



The Mazda X300L flown by Brad Bennets gave a classy display that included cutting a ribbon while flying inverted, just a few metres above the ground.



Pierre Gouws flew his L-39 ZU-TEE again, and this time came in much closer to the crowds than on previous occasions.

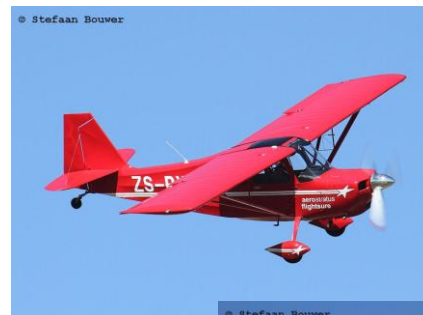


One advantage the Rand Airport has is that the crowd line is L-shaped. This means that displaying aircraft can drop one wing and maintain a gentle turn, to show off the aircraft to both legs of the L. The morning sun catches them perfectly, resulting in beautiful wing planform photos. This is shown by all the



formation flying with Glen Warden (ZS-MZX), Ian Billing (ZS-MZY) and Neill Trollop (ZS-MZN) in the Wesbank/Dunlop Pitts tucked in tightly before they started their display.

A number of civilian aircraft then performed. Two Balanka Decathlon 8KJAB aircraft went through their paces (as well as the microlight formation group "MISASA Snakes". This team usually changes their routine several times every year and this always creates some surprises.



Not to be outdone by the SAAF shows now popping out flares, they had their own flare version for countering all the SAM's found over the suburbs.



Henley Air Helicopters displayed two Bell 407's. Both were in dark livery with red and white rotor blades, reminiscent of the colours used in Vietnam to help the high flying fixed wing aircraft identify low flying helicopters. It looked real nice.



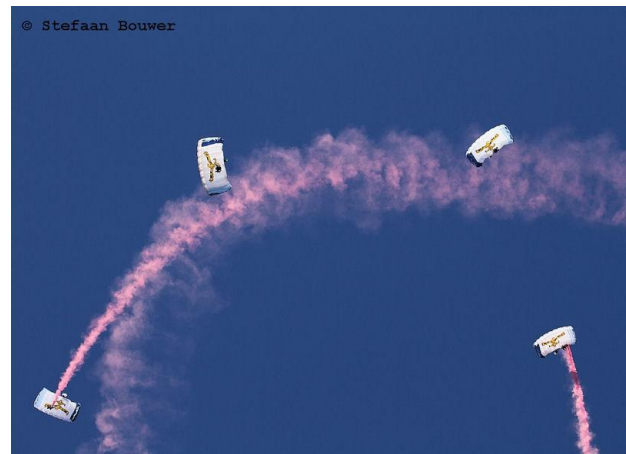
A number of aerobatic aircraft displayed. A few did solo routines i.e. Johnie Smith in his Suzuki Slick 360 (Left Top), Charles Urban in his striking tiger striped YAK 55 (Right Top), Warren



Aslam in his SU-29, (Left Bottom) and Rob Beaumont in SU-29 ZS-BLX, who also did a dual display with Harvard 7689 flown by Pierre Gouws (Right Bottom).



The SAAF also had another participant, the parachute team dropped by a 35 Sqn Dakota who circled down in front of the crowds.



A number of old air trainer types, now in private hands, rekindled the old fires. The highlight for me was a formation flypast by D H Chipmunks. The older Vets who actually flew them are by now probably too frail to attend the air shows, and I hope these photos bring back some memories. It must be a rare sight to see three of them flying together.

The younger SAAF members will be more familiar with the three Albatrosses that were displayed in tight formation flown by Larry Beamish, Charles Berman and Brian Guar. Each one gave an individual display. Two are still in the original SAAF scheme and ZS-FIN in an overall white colour.



The airlines were conspicuous in their absence, but a F.28 (Air Aquaria) displayed its lines for us, and further demonstrated the bang made by a tyre burst, when it hit a buried steel rod. We were about 20 metres away and the percussion from the bang still reached us, almost like a stun grenade.



A DC-9 (Phoebus Apollo) was put through its paces by Hennie Delport .



CC Pocock in his Cessna 172 called Bush Air 1 was responsible for a pyrotechnic show as part of his display. Lots of fire and bangs to excite the crowds and I am sure it is a huge crowd pleaser.

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The penultimate display was the Silver Falcons with their afternoon show. Since I have shown many single photos, I will give you some of their formation and “chicken run” displays.

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I was watching the beautiful moon all day to see if anything would fly near it. The only aircraft that eventually crossed it were the four Astra's waiting for number five (Nico Frylink) to finish his routine. The photo was taken at extreme range and then blown up. It is not that sharp but still came out okay.

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I also managed to get the team leader Major Scott Ternent saluting the crowds at the end of the display.



The final display was a display called TORA TORA. It comprised of the Harvards doing a mock attack that was synchronised with another pyrotechnic



extravaganza by C C Boccock and Company. It was definitely more exciting than Guy Fawkes, with Harvards swooping down on the fires and explosions.

To our ever present ground crew I dedicate the next photo. These chaps were hard at work, turning the props to wind up the Harvard's rubber bands, while another one was cleaning the canopies for the pilots.



I conclude by showing off Flip Vermeulen's Catalina that is almost fully painted in an early US Navy coastal scheme, as ordered by its new owner. I hope we will see it flying at a few of our air shows before it heads for its new home in the USA.

