

VIRGINIA AIR SHOW 14 JULY 2012

The Virginia Air Show took place on 14 July 2012. It turned out to have the only sunrays shining on an airfield in the majority of the country on that day. While South Africa froze in the cold, we had beautiful sunshine, except for about 30 minutes. Most locals packed and left when light rain started falling late afternoon, but it quickly abated to bring forth that warm yellow glow for photographs. Most photos here were taken prior to the post-rain show.



I arrived before sunrise, finding some spectators already sitting in their chairs next to the barriers in the dark. SAAFA had a gazebo and I found John Boardman helping to set it up just after sunrise. The spectators filled up the very limited



space and Brian Emminis gave a background to the show, calling up John and interviewing him about the first time the sound barrier was broken by John and his wingman at one of the first shows held in Durban.



As usual the show was opened by a procession of all the emergency vehicles accompanied by a large contingent of Harley Davidson's. It was led by the Airport Manager Glynn Bryce. This followed by a Para drop from an Atlas Angel, an upgraded ex-SAAF Kudu.



The first display was by Michel Lusch, in his Balanca Super Decathlon. He also displayed a SU-22 R/C aircraft later which was raffled by SAAFA DBN. They managed to collect about R30000 for the Durban SAAFA Benevolent Fund. The person who won the draw declined to take it and gave it back to SAAFA to use for future raffles.



Larry Beamish and his son Jason followed, displaying a formation consisting of a King Air and a Bonanza. Larry did a few fly pasts with one engine feathered with Jason following closely, before each did solo displays.





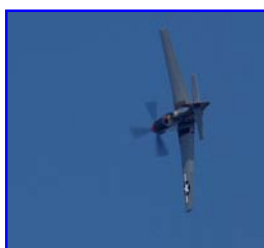
There were then two Pitt Special Formation displays. The first was the Gabriel Pitts team with the usual team members, Scully Levine, Arnie Meneghelli, Ellis Levin and Stewart Lithgow (10 + 11). I am showing the formation diving and also a nice one of them switching.



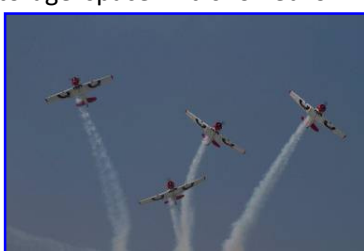
The second Pitt Special display was the three man Goodyear team led by Glen Warden with Nigel Hopkins and Neil Trollip who also did the solo display (12 + 13). They did many switch overs, cross overs and



koeksister sequences. I am including the one in the best sunlight.



“Mustang Sally” flown by Menno Parsons did two beautiful displays during the day and late in the evening with Nigel Hopkins forming on him. The frontal view is the view many of the Axis Forces must have seen behind them during the war. The next photo shows the view those same pilots would have seen had they been on the Mustang’s Six. The formation photo is in the late afternoon sun with Nigel Hopkins behind him in the MX2. Nigel then gave a solo display and the photo shows him approaching the line, scaring the Hadedra out of its breakfast. Just about midday the Raven 500 was flown by Michel Lusch publicly for the first time and featured a new glass instrument panel, and converted engine that can use a variety of fuel, including an ordinary pump fuel. The Raven was followed by the Equestra Harvard Team. Previously under the Cell C livery, they now fly in their new colour schemes, still consisting of Scully and Ellis Levin, Arnie Meneghelli and Stewart Lithgow. Another ex-SAAF aircraft was the Quest Kodiak an ex-Caravan converted with a better engine and bigger storage space. It showed off its



colours in the midday sun.



Two Zlin's did a dual aerobatic display just before lunch with Michel Lusch in the white livery and Roger Deare in the red one. The single Zlin is Michel Lusch falling over the sky at the end of his stall.

I am including two photos of my favourite Helicopter, the Hughes 500. I cannot believe that after all these years it is the first time I have actually seen it display at an air show. The close up is to show the egg-shaped side view and the next is to show off a South African developed method of transporting darted rhinos to safety via its feet. It is reputed to be 100% safe, but I am sure those feet must have real dark blue toes at the end of such a sortie.



Lunch was mid-afternoon followed by a Para drop from a Dakota and the Kudu/Angel.

The only two fast jet displays occurred after lunch. First up was the black and red L-29 flown by Larry Beamish, followed by the L-39 flown by Dave Mandel. Both gave close up low fly pasts, much closer than that we see them up in Gauteng.



Unfortunately the rain started falling just as the Yaks took to the air, rapidly dispersing the spectators, but also darkening the sky enough to dampen

down the Yak photographs. I managed one worthwhile photo of them banking away gracefully. The second last aerobatic display was the well-known Zoom Mazdas, flown by Brad Bennett in the yellow colours, and Ellis Levin in the white one. The light rapidly got better for them and I managed some good



photos.



The final display was the usual night show given by the Equestra Harvards. Always awe inspiring and full of lights. I'm sure that the UFO hunters must drool at such a sighting if they see that collection of lights from afar.

My final photo is of Hadede and Hadedee in perfect form performing an all engine feathered fly past for the crowds, having a real sense of humour failure due to their noisy counterparts filling up their air space from dawn to dusk.

There were many people who played a role, spending many hours preparing yet another memorable show at Virginia. Although some big draw cards did not pitch up, it was still a great day out for the family and friends for the day. That is what we all want, so it can only be called a huge success. My special thanks to Ray de Vries, the main organizer and Leon du Plessis from SAAFA who helped me get to a good spot for the photos. I must also thank Rani Naidoo and the Wisharts for allowing me on the balcony of their hanger. Thank you guys.



STEFAN BOUWER