

SUN 'N FUN SPRINT AIR RACE

And the winner is . . . Klaus Savier!

BY DAVID GUSTAFSON

PHOTOS BY KARL JENSEN

On the morning of Friday, April 12, the first annual Sun 'n Fun Sprint Air Race, sponsored by Aircraft Spruce & Specialty, was launched in Troy, Alabama. Half the participants were flying homebuilts, the other half had certificated aircraft. The finish line was 322 nautical miles to the southeast at Bartow Municipal Airport, about 15 miles east of Lakeland, site of the Sun 'n Fun Fly-In. The Fly-In was set to start on Sunday, April 14, so that turned out to be the final destination for almost all of the race pilots.

With three race categories, a total of 33 entries showed up to participate. The class breakdown was according to horsepower. There were Sandpipers, Pelicans and Flamingos. The first group was for any aircraft with 75 horsepower or less. Pelicans could be 76 to 120 horsepower and the heavyweights went up to 160 horsepower.

Five years ago, when Aircraft Spruce set up the much longer Great Cross

Country Flying Race, the Unlimited class drew entries with up to 550 cubic inches. The smallest category was for 360 cubic inches or less. Understandably, pilots with smaller engines wanted an opportunity to compete in a cross country race, as well. So Jim Irwin, who heads up Aircraft Spruce, stuck on the idea of holding a Copperstate Dash in the fall and the Sun 'n Fun Sprint in the spring. It has provided people with something to do on their way to a fly-in. It's a great way to experience flight, and one has only to tune to 122.75, and listen to the enroute chatter between air race participants, to discover a sense of humor and camaraderie that cannot be beat.

With this year's introductory race, the Sandpiper category drew two Pulsars, a KR-2, Aeronca Champ and Taylorcraft BC12-D.

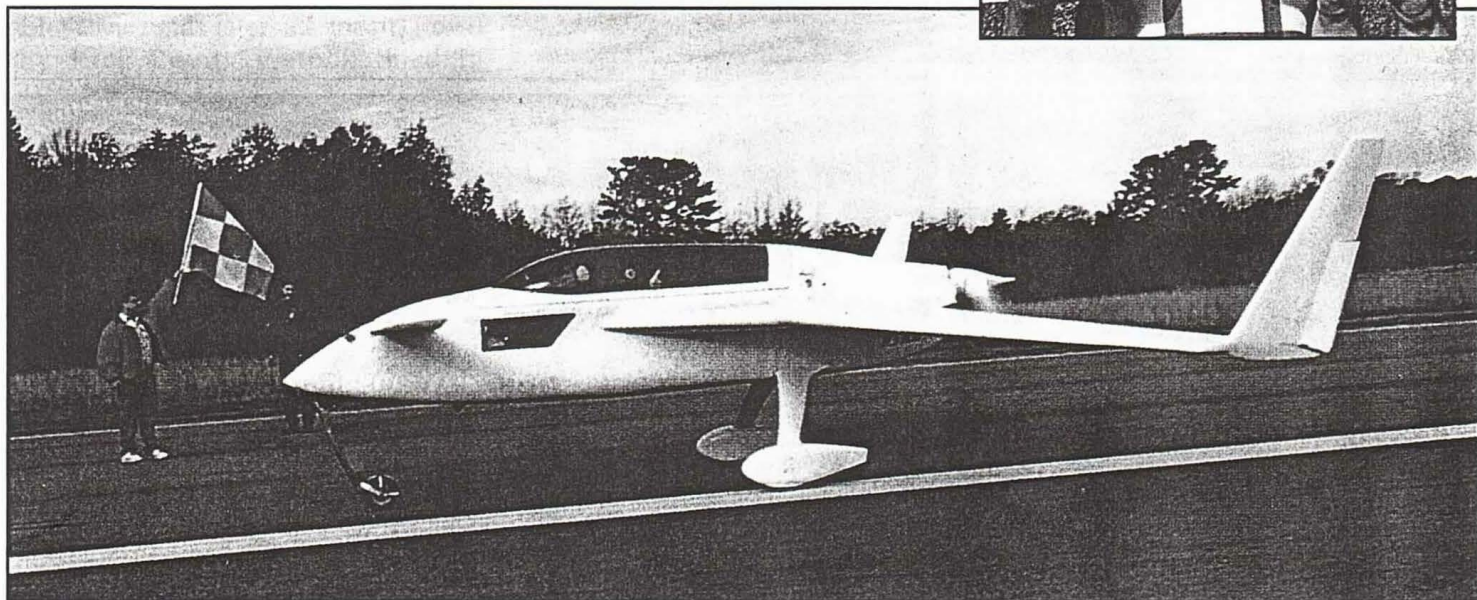
There were five VariEzes in the Pelican class, a Cassutt, Quickie, Bellanca 7ECA, Cessna 120 and 150,

and the Davis DA-9. Over half the race entries were in the Flamingo category. Piper Warriors and Glasairs seemed to be the dominant type.

Jim Irwin (left), president of Aircraft Spruce & Specialty, and Klaus Savier, winner of the Sun 'n Fun Sprint.



Klaus Savier and his award winning Continental powered VariEze.





Race winners, front row, left to right, Rich Levitsky, Howard MacFarland and Ken Shugart. Back row, left to right, Brooks Robinson, Troy Petteway, Dale Schonmeyer, Jim Irwin of Aircraft Spruce, Charles Airesman and Klaus Savier.

What was interesting was that there were quite a few familiar faces from the first Copperstate Dash, which was run last October.

Pilots began arriving on Thursday morning, the day before the race and they kept coming in all day. Trent Crawford, who runs Pike Aviation at Troy, was kept busy pumping avgas, handing out quarts of oil and assisting with the occasional mechanical glitch. One of the VariEze's had problems with his nosewheel, and Trent took the gear off a local customer's aircraft to allow the race pilot the opportunity to fly in the race. He shipped the gear back later.

At 7:00 Thursday evening, the group came together for the first time at the Holiday Inn in Troy. At that point, officials went over the procedures for the race, covering every detail from the final briefing in the morning, wave off procedures, enroute activity, crossing the finish line and the awards ceremony which was held at Sun 'n Fun on Sunday morning. Air race numbers were then handed out and that's when it became known that 33 of the 40 people who had signed up for the race actually showed up to participate.

In the past, weather briefings were provided at Copperstate and Denver by FSS. Since Troy is 100 miles from the nearest FSS, it wasn't possible for anyone to make the trip, so each pilot had to obtain his own weather by calling Flight Service at O'dark-thirty, Friday morning.

CATEGORY A — SANDPIPER

Place	Pilot	Aircraft	Speed
1st	Troy L. Petteway	KR-2	136.96
2nd	Howard MacFarlane	Pulsar	112.85
3rd	Dale A. Schonmeyer	Pulsar	98.46
4th	J. Kevin Lacey	Taylorcraft	72.30
5th	Joseph Mark Smokovitz	Aeronca 7AC	49.14

Troy Petteway's VW powered KR-2.



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Following a buffet breakfast, the pilots boarded shuttle buses to the airport. The excitement began building, as anticipated, at the 7:00 a.m. briefing. Fortunately, the weather was perfect, the winds were favorable for most of the route, and aside from a radar balloon on a 15,000' tether at Cross City (it was almost on the ground when everyone flew by), the course presented no obstacles.

An hour, 35 minutes and 50 seconds after Trent Crawford waved him off with a checkered flag, Klaus Savier, Santa Paula, CA, flew his highly refined VariEze over the finish line at Bartow, FL. His ground speed from releasing his brakes to overflying the finish line had averaged 201.60 kts.! EAAers Neil Holmes and Patricia Morrison were there to log him in . . . with the help of tower chief Eddie Roberts. Nine minutes, 50 seconds later, Ken Shugart streaked across Bartow in the yellow DA-9, fondly referred to as the "crotch rocket", "flying banana" or "yellow cigar." His ground speed: 182.84 kt. The third pilot to cross the finish line was Charles D. Airesman, who also flew a VariEze. He was 20 seconds behind Shugart, with an average speed of 181.69. That's cutting it close.

The significance of these three pilots is that they were all in the Pelican or middle category. They outran everyone in the higher horsepower Flamingo class!

Brooks Robinson, Jonesboro, GA, led the Flamingos in his 160 hp Glasair IRG, which covered the course in 1:47:20, averaging 180.00 kts. Fayette McElhannon, Jr., was second, also in a Glasair IRG, with 1:56:05/166.43 kts. Eleven seconds later, a Lancair, flown by Rick Levitsky, took third in 1:56:19/166.1 kts.

In Sandpiper, Troy Petteway, Columbia, TN, took first in his KR-2 with a half hour to spare. He logged in at 2:21:04, averaging 136.96 kts. Considering he did that on a 65 hp VW engine conversion, it's a pretty remarkable showing. Two Pulsars finished second and third: Howard MacFarlane clocked 2:51:12/112.85 kts. and Dale A. Schonmeyer did it in 3:16:13/98.46 kts. Bringing up the rear was the Aeronca Champ. With two fuel stops, Joe Smokovitz took 6 hours, 33 minutes and averaged 49 kts. That didn't detract from the fun he had par-



CATEGORY B — PELICAN

Place	Pilot	Aircraft	Speed
1st	Klaus Savier	VariEze	201.60
2nd	Ken Shugart	Davis DA-9	182.84
3rd	Charles D. Airesman, Jr.	VariEze	181.69
4th	Rob Martinson	VariEze	181.13
5th	Richard Desportes	Cassutt 111M	153.66
6th	James Gabrick	VariEze	153.07
7th	Lester Hildebrand	Q-200	143.04
8th	Josh L. Rubin	VariEze	134.71
9th	Gerhard Defner	Bellanca	81.15
10th	Jeffrey Ferraro	Cessna 150	80.14

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CATEGORY C — FLAMINGO

Place	Pilot	Aircraft	Speed
1st	Brooks Robinson	Glasair IRG	180.00
2nd	Fayette McElhannon, Jr.	Glasair IRG	166.43
3rd	Rich Levitsky	Lancair	166.10
4th	Roger Crupper	Long-EZ	160.53
5th	Claudio Tonnini	RV-4	160.33
6th	Steve Cummings	Glasair TD	158.40
7th	Eddie Elland	Thorp T-18	155.68
8th	Eugene Plazak	Grumman	147.33
9th	Charles Duncan	RV-4	138.91
10th	Richard King	PA-28-160	115.24
11th	Paul Nopper	PA-28-151	105.53
12th	Chuck Schroll	Maule	102.77
13th	Michael Mansfield	Cessna Cardinal	102.33
14th	Joseph Bell	Piper PA-22	99.40
15th	G. A. Newhouse	PA-18-160	85.32
16th	Nick Saum	Piper PA-18	85.05
DNF	Martin Hill, Jr.	PA-18A	
DNF	Milton R. Buls	Glasair IRG	

ticipating. Only one pilot dropped out and landed safely, but couldn't complete the race.

In case you didn't notice, all of the prize winners were homebuilts. In fact, the first eight places in Pelican and the

first nine places in Flamingo were won by homebuilts. There's a message in there somewhere.

Because of the final standings, Aircraft Spruce is changing the Copperstate Dash and Sun 'n Fun Sprint next time

around. Each of the three race categories will have two divisions, one for homebuilts and the other for certificated aircraft. There is just no way the factory builts can compete with the homebuilts.

On Sunday morning at 11:00, all the race pilots reconvened at Sun 'n Fun's interview circle as plaques and \$4,000 in cash awards were handed out to the winners. Response to the race was enthusiastic and nearly everyone indicated they wanted to return next year.

The race wouldn't have been possible without help from Bill Cocker, who heads up air ops at Sun 'n Fun and found Neil and Patricia for us. Billy Henderson, executive director of the fly-in, also pitched in, as did EAA and King Schools.

The next race on Aircraft Spruce's schedule is the Great Cross Country Flying Race, set for July 29 running from Jeffco, near Denver, to Oshkosh. Then in the fall there will be the second Copperstate Dash, which runs from Apple Valley, CA to Phoenix. If you'd like more information on any of these races, contact Aircraft Spruce & Specialty at 1-800/824-1930, Fax 724/871-7289 or write them at P.O. Box 424, Fullerton, CA 98632. ♦