



Kiwi Scale Modellers Excel at International Top Gun Competition

GWYN Avenell and Brian Borland, both well known scale modellers in New Zealand, successfully competed at the prestigious Top Gun invitational event held recently in Florida. No strangers to the international modelling scene, in recent years they have also enjoyed competing at world championships in Switzerland and Sweden.

An annual event since 1989, Top Gun was the first invitation only scale contest to showcase authentic scale models both in flying characteristics and for build detail. In recent years, this competition has grown in popularity with over 100 contestants and more than 10,000 spectators during the 5 days of competition.

This year there were 115 entries overall, making this among the biggest scale competition of its type in the world. It is a truly international event, with pilots from South America, Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand, as well as a large number of flyers from all over America.

There are three different competition classes – Masters, Expert and Team. Gwyn and Brian competed in the Masters Class which had 13 competitors. A Masters competitor is required to have completed a large percentage of the design and build of their aircraft as well as to be the pilot in the competition itself.

Overall, Brian, with his Miles M2 Hawk Major, came in at 5th place followed closely behind by Gwyn in 6th position. Gwyn's aircraft, a Douglas SBD-5 ("Slow But Deadly") Dauntless, was judged the best in the static category of the class. It was a great achievement for the boys from Down Under, especially considering that both Brian and Gwyn's models are not brand new and have been flown on a regular basis in local and national scale events.

Gwyn's Dauntless was completed in 2004. He started it in 1999, making it a long

term project of patience and dedication that consumed a large amount of his free time over a five year period. Gwyn spent many hours researching the aircraft, pouring over photos and plans from which he was able to scale details down to the required model size.

Contributed by Janice Angus

found it a different type of competition to the World Champs. "It was very intensive with up to 4 flight lines operating at the same time so you had to be very much on the ball with your flying".

The static format of the competition was more stringent than at other events they had competed at. The emphasis was on judging that the aircraft appearance is as authentic as possible. Paint on the warbirds had to be suitably worn and showing battle scars - a pristine, shiny paint finish is just not realistic enough.

The event was very social with everybody having a great time. This was the first major event of the American model flying season so it

was a great opportunity for competitors to catch up after winter. In fact, Gwyn said he enjoyed it so much he is already planning for attending again next year!

Of course, travelling half way around the world with a model aircraft is not possible without a dedicated support team. Gwyn and Brian were accompanied by Christina Avenell and John Butler. I expect they will both be volunteering to go again in 2012.



Clockwise from left: 1: Gwyn with his Douglas SBD-5 Dauntless on the flight line at Top Gun. 2: Showing lifelike detail on Gunner in the Dauntless. 3: Dauntless in flight.

Gwyn's model is a faithful replica of the SBD-5 Dauntless which was flown by No.25 Squadron of the RNZAF in active service from Bougainville between 1943 and 1944. A lot of time and effort was taken in perfecting the tiniest of details which included making sure the colour is authentic, the pilot and gunner's uniforms are accurate and even to checking the position of individual rivets in the fuselage.

As he regularly takes aircraft overseas for competitions, Gwyn designed the Dauntless so it could be broken down for transporting easily and safely. The wings are split into two sections and the whole aircraft packs into several boxes which can be checked in as luggage when travelling by air.

Getting to the event involved a flight to Los Angeles where they were able to get their planes ferried on to Florida via a fellow competitor. According to Gwyn, the model flying fraternity are a great bunch of people who are always willing to help out fellow flyers when it comes to logistics, accommodation or any required assistance.

Being their first time at Top Gun, Gwyn

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