

Hot Air



Message from the President

December 2014

A few club business items before we get to the fun stuff. At the December club meeting, we will elect our club officers for the upcoming year. Mike Lewis has been our club treasurer for several years and has decided to step down. Mike has the books set up in a very efficient manner that would be easy for you to take over. John Spielman has been our club Secretary for many years and is willing to continue for this year, but would like to hand it off to someone else by the end of the year. All club officer positions are available to candidates who would like to volunteer. Please consider supporting your club as an officer, especially for the two positions mentioned above.

The next time you see them at a meeting or at one of the fields, please take the time to thank all of your club officers for the work they do to keep our club going. Having guys like Jerry, John, Mike and Chris taking care of business sure makes the operation of the club go smoothly. Thanks guys.

Entradero Park refurbishment continues. Progress is slow with no obvious end in sight. Continue to use caution when driving and walking around the facility. Once the upgrades at Entradero are completed, we will need to work with the City of Torrance and whomever takes over the lease for baseball activities on the Babe Ruth field to ensure our access for flying. The City of Torrance is very supportive of our activities at Entradero. Gaining the same support of the new baseball guys will require the efforts of your club officers and our members in the way we interact with them.

We have had issues with the lock on the North

Entradero Towers entrance gate. The gate itself has been damaged. The Little League baseball guys have put a new larger combination lock on the gate for which we do not have the combination. We have a new PSF lock on the old combination on the gate. Unfortunately, the baseball guys have secured the gate with their lock on several occasions that prevents us from gaining access to the field by bypassing our lock. If you find that our lock has

been bypassed, let me or one of the other PSF officers know so we can correct it. I am working with the City and Little League to get this straightened out. Please make sure that you secure the gate lock when entering and leaving the park. If the locks are configured in such a way that locking the gate is not possible, let me

know. When locking the gate, make sure that the gate can be opened with either the Little League or PSF lock.

Now for the fun stuff. It looks like we are heading into some unstable weather over the next week or two. We will have to wait to see

whether we can pull off the Fun Fly's. The Del Cerro Fun Fly will be Saturday, December 6th and the Entradero Park Fun Fly will be Saturday, December 20th.

The Club members in attendance at the November meeting agreed that we will have our annual "free raffle" at the December meeting on the 3rd. Jerry Lake has been wheeling and dealing to gather up a bunch of goodies for the raffle. Please come to the December meeting and support the selection of club officers, volunteer for a position in the Club, enjoy the company of your fellow PSFers and enjoy the raffle. All the best in 2015.

Next Meeting

**Wednesday,
December 3rd**

**La Romeria Park
7:30pm**

Upcoming Fun-Flys

**Del Cerro December 6th
Entradero December 20th**



From the Vice President...

Excerpt from a 11/24/14 article from the Wall St. Journal regarding upcoming drone rules from the FAA.

"Highly anticipated federal rules on commercial drones are expected to require operators to have a license and limit flights to daylight hours, below 400 feet and within sight of the person at the controls, according to people familiar with the rule-making process.

The drone industry has awaited commercial rules for about six years, hoping the rules would pave the way for widespread drone use in industries such as farming, filmmaking and construction. Current FAA policy allows recreational drone flights in the U.S. but essentially bars drones from commercial use. While the FAA wants to open the skies to unmanned commercial flights, the expected rules are more restrictive than drone supporters sought and wouldn't address privacy concerns over the use of drones,

people familiar with the matter said. The agency also plans to group all drones weighing less than 55 pounds under one set of rules. That would dash hopes for looser rules on the smallest drones, such as the 2.8-pound Phantom line of camera-equipped, four-rotor helicopters made by China's SZ DJI Technology Co. Similar-sized devices are seen as the most commercially viable drones and have surged in popularity in the last two years."

JACK NICAS
ANDY PASZTOR

Here's a sampling of the cool stuff that will be available at the December "free raffle"!





An F3F Update from Steve Krantz

Well, I made it through the 2014 F3F season mostly in one piece, which is good, but the big news was that I finally broke my string of last place finishes in the 2013 season!

It appears that I hold the dubious record of having the most last place finishes in a season in SCSR (SoCal Slope Racing) history, due to my “remarkable” performances last year. However, I made a big leap forward in the last several contests of 2014 which actually put me in 9th place for the season, an improvement from 10th last year. You might ask how is it possible for someone to rank in the top 10 and still get so many last places. It’s simple: a lot of people race in a few events each year, but don’t show up for most of them, so I simply accumulated more total points than they did. Now back to the story.

Deja Vu

I started this season with a lot of practice under my belt, so I knew my skills had improved. But when you’re competing against the regular SCSR racers, which include 4 guys who earned the right to represent the US team in the last 2 F3F world championships, you’ve got to be realistic. I knew my Strega was temperamental, delicate and not as fast as what the competition was flying but I was ready to race and figured I would at least stay out of last place.



My trusty and much-crashed 2-meter Typhoon backup plane

During the first few contests, I was occasionally clocking some respectable times, but was constantly having to resort to my back up plane, due to the Strega breaking at every competition. No matter how carefully I landed, the fuselage kept breaking whenever I didn’t set it down perfectly. As most of you know, my landings normally aren’t perfect, so I was becoming an expert at applying epoxy, fiberglass and carbon to the point where I had rebuilt most of the fuse structure in this plane. The odd thing was that nothing else ever broke. Outside of a few scuffs and scratches, the wings and tails were free of repairs. During this time my little 2 meter back up plane was getting a work out and required no repairs at all.



The notoriously temperamental and delicate Strega

The final straw was when I again had to fly my back up plane and immediately started putting up faster times than my race plane. So I sold both of the Stregas to sport flyers that hopefully have the repair skills and time to maintain them and began racing my poor little Typhoon full time. I found that my race times were remarkably consistent including one event where I put up 6 consecutive 48 second rounds so at least I had that going for me. But with the competition flying purpose built 3 meter race planes my times were at least 10 seconds slower on average when the wind really started blowing. I had to invest in a competitive plane if I was going continue to play the F3f game.



Upgrading the Arsenal

Around this time, a fellow competitor texted me that he was selling a used Pike Precision for a friend who was getting out of racing and asked if I was interested - I was. The Precision is an airframe that is actually capable of winning F3F races. I had flown several Precisions during their ceremonial maiden flights that typically include handing off these expensive F3F thoroughbreds to any qualified pilot in attendance. Not sure how I qualified, but I knew from my brief experience on the sticks that these planes are very different from my old plane. The Strega has to be flown at the limit to produce a decent time but the Pike can pull off a fast round with hardly any effort on the part of the pilot. Another advantage the Pike has over the Strega is a lot more ballast capacity. Whereas I can only ballast the Strega up to 109 oz, the Pike can go up to 145 oz. with the stock brass ballast. We made a date to meet at Pt. Fermin and I brought my wallet.



The Pike Precision is a fast and rugged F3F racer

When I first laid eyes on my potential purchase, I was not impressed. The plane had the normal scuffs and scratches, but also some damage to the tail that had been repaired with some clear packing tape. However, I decided to reserve judgment until I flew it.

After chucking it off the cliff, I was handed the TX and soon realized that even with the hastily-repaired damage, the Pike was a dream to fly. It responded to control inputs effortlessly and seemed to leap out of the corners with visibly more speed than anything

I'd ever flown. After 5 minutes reconfirming what I already knew about this airframe, I handed the TX back. Okay, I'll take it.

With some more permanent tail repairs and TX programming, my new F3F weapon was ready for its maiden flight. I showed up at Fermin and ran into one of my SCSR racing buddies (Bob M.) who graciously offered to perform the ceremonial toss. I also got some good set up tips since he's a long time Pike Precision owner. The only bit of advice I chose not to accept was the seemingly radical low rate he suggested for the elevators, 50%. According to him that was the highest rate one should use flying this plane. I actually chose this as my lowest rate and it almost proved my undoing.



This looks like some of my landings

With the last minute tuning complete, all that was left to do was toss it off the cliff and fly. Maiden flights of expensive molded sailplanes are never without some trepidation, especially when you consider the investment and the fact that if it doesn't fly, it will end up in the ocean or on the rocks at the base of the cliff, so I was appropriately nervous. Bob asked if I was ready, I nodded and he proceeded to give the plane a manly full-throttle launch.

With no ballast and a stiff onshore breeze, combined with the poorly tuned elevator rates, the Pike pitched up violently, zooming above us and threatening to loop into the park. Bob screamed "Push, push, push!" and with the fate of my new plane dangling in the balance, I applied down elevator for all I was



worth. I caught glimpses of the plane as it hung in the sky surrounded by the sun's corona while my retinas fried from the solar radiation. Finally the big 3-meter model lumbered out of the sun and over the Pacific, as I desperately tried to blink the sun spots from my vision. I gingerly maneuvered around and flipped the switch to low rates while Bob shook his head and muttered something under his breath.

The usual maiden flight buzz was definitely subdued by the unexpected launch drama, so after a few more minutes of tuning the flight mode trims and elevator to flap mixes, I commenced the Fermin landing procedure and put it back on the ground.

Proof's in the Pudding

On the ground was where it stayed for several more weeks until the next SCSR competition which was scheduled for Point Fermin. I showed up and began unloading my gear for the contest accompanied by sarcastic comments from my fellow competitors when they saw that I had my old beat-up Typhoon with me, yet again. There was a collective sigh of relief when I brought out the Precision and began to assemble it.

The standard protocol for F3F competition dictates that a serious competitor should have two identical models for contests with one as a backup. Having been down that road and getting stuck with two underperforming planes last season, I decided I was going to take things a little slower this time around and get a lot of rounds under my belt with just the one plane so I could make an informed decision on what's next. Besides, even two identical models never really fly the same and I could always revert to my trusty Typhoon if I damaged my primary plane.

I only had about 10 minutes of flying time on my Pike prior to this event but wasn't too concerned, knowing that I would need to learn "on the job" anyway, since racing is very different than normal sport flying. I was looking forward to my first round with a competitive plane. What I wasn't so thrilled about was drawing the number 1 position during the flight order lottery which meant I would be

launching first as the "lift test dummy" with an unfamiliar plane and with the wind barely blowing. In a rare moment of compassion the CD granted me the benefit of a trim flight that wouldn't count as a timed round.

My first few rounds were flown in very soft conditions, but the Precision was well-mannered and my times were on-par with the other competitors. Then the wind started to freshen considerably. Now I was presented with the challenge of learning how to ballast this beast, which unlike my old Strega, has ballast compartments in the wing instead of the fuselage. Adding further complexity was the real possibility of over ballasting the Pike and stalling it out of the sky and into the cliff face. Fortunately, I was surrounded by other Pike pilots, so I received immediate and helpful guidance on how to ballast properly for the conditions.

Since the ballast is located in the wings fore and aft of the CG, the distribution of the brass slugs is critical to avoid inadvertently moving the CG. Therefore, all Pike flyers possess a ballast matrix which specifies which slugs to place where to achieve a desired weight while maintaining the CG.

With added ballast and substantially more wind, the Pike really came alive and I proceeded to lay down 3 personal-best times in route to a 41.XX second round, which

validated my decision to buy a competitive F3F plane. Even though I'd barely flown the Pike and hadn't optimized the set up, I was already miles ahead of my performances with my Strega.

Having a capable plane allowed me to focus on developing better racing skills without having to force the plane around the course. This was a real benefit during the last two contests of the season, one of which was held at White Point, a classic F3F venue with very limited access. It's a rare treat to fly here since it is only available once or twice a year and the landing zone is plush green grass unlike every other So Cal slope site. The only negatives at White Point are the very technical nature of the slope and the wicked rotors swirling through the landing area. I struggled to go fast here last year with the usual cross slope wind direction and the need to be

See a video of Steve's first F3F race with the Pike Precision at Pt. Fermin on [YouTube](#)



very precise on the downwind Base B turn to avoid losing energy and facing a long upwind grind back to base A.

I was able to turn in some fast times and moved comfortably up in the rankings. It was here that I learned another quality of the Pike Precision, after a couple of not-so-graceful landings: this plane is strong! Catching a wing tip or lawn darting it into the turf yielded some grass stains but zero damage.

The final race was held at Pt. Fermin, which is like coming home for local slope racers and the traditional location for the last race of the season. The weather was postcard-perfect, but the wind was uncharacteristically late in arriving. It was 3pm before the action got underway which meant that this was going to be an abbreviated event with minimal rounds flown and points earned for everyone.

As had become disturbingly common this season, I again drew the number 1 starting position. I had fallen asleep in my beach chair waiting for the wind

to show up and so was startled by the CD yelling my name when conditions finally became flyable. Groggy from my nap, I rushed to grab my TX and plane and get into position to launch at the cliff's edge. My launcher didn't seem totally convinced when I mumbled that I was ready to go so he asked me again. Suddenly realizing that I couldn't remember if I checked to see if everything was working properly, I double checked and found that I had neglected to turn on my transmitter. Oops!

The delayed race consisted of only 5 rounds, but I had a blast flying and turned in consistently good times in each round, beating some guys for the first time all season. It was a great end to the 2014 season and I learned a valuable lesson about competing with some of the best F3F'rs in the world: when they give you advice it's best to listen carefully because they're usually right.

See you at Del Cerro!

-Steve

**Club Officers and Volunteers
(again) for 2014**

- President: Jeff Chambers
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- Vice President: Jerry Lake
310-370-6697
- Treasurer: Mike Lewis
310-987-8178
- Secretary: John Spielman
310-378-0951
- Newsletter: Chris Newton
310-347-6806

Come on out to the monthly meeting for the famous December "free" raffle!