

Organizing A Scale Contest
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Dedicated to the memory of Harris Lee and *"Keeping The Dream Alive"*
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Before I get started I'd like to welcome Earl Aune as the new chairman of the **US Scale Masters**. I'm sure you have enjoyed his efforts thus far. (Great job Earl.) I am also sure you will enjoy this and future issues as Earl and his team continue to provide the scale enthusiast with an entertaining and informative publication. Good luck to Earl and Josie and all the loyal **US Scale Masters** members.. *"Lets Keep The Dream Alive."*

Scale modeling has been around for quite some time now. Probably much longer than most of us would like to admit. Scale really got off the ground with the formation of the US Scale Masters by Harris Lee in 1979. The concept of scale model competition was fairly new when first introduced to the modeling masses. But as more and more scale enthusiasts attended the then few contest it was discovered that these things were really great fun! As years progressed the number of contest held each year increased dramatically. Today there are so many contest scheduled that you could literally attend a contest somewhere in the country almost on every other weekend of the year.

Some contest are one day events and draw mostly local flyers. Some are two or three day events and will draw people from many miles away. What makes these events so popular? What inspires people from all over the country to travel many miles just to fly scale models? Or better yet, just to watch scale models fly? The answer is relatively simple. These contest are fun!! They are great places to gather with friends old and new who share the common interest of scale modeling. For the spectator (and many of us too I'm sure) attending a scale contest is like getting a living history lesson. Where else can you get to see some of aviation's historic aircraft fly?

There are two very important ingredients for this type of successful contest: **1)** It should be held at a good site and **2)** it should be well organized. We all recognize a good or bad flying site when we see one. The physical layout and appearance of a flying site will always reflect the care and hard work that was put into it by the host club(s). It's not so easy, however, to recognize the hard work put into organizing the successful event. Most of the hard work organizing and running a successful contest is started a year or so in advance. There are many tasks to be taken care of in order to assure a good time for all.

To give you some idea as to the up front work involved I'd like to pass on some of the techniques that my fellow workers and I have used in forming a giant scale WWII Miniature Warbird Fly-In. This is a non-competition event that has been run successfully for 10 years. The lessons learned from it and observations of other qualifiers have contributed greatly to enhance our Long Island qualifier.

The Team: Probably the most important aspect in organizing a successful contest is to start with a team of dedicated individuals who share the common interest of promoting scale modeling. This team should consist of people who have the drive, dedication and talent to see the project through. It's good to have a group who gets along together and respects each person's individual talents. Within this group there must be a team leader who is good at recognizing each individual's talent and is capable of delegating various responsibilities to the appropriate person. If the team leader tries to do it all you're destined for failure right from the start. The tasks to be handled are just too numerous for one person to handle. Once the team is set each member is assigned his task. It's important to assign the right task to the right person and let him just go do it. Use every members strong points and the work load will go easy. Have faith in your team and you won't be disappointed. It is very

helpful to hold review meetings from time to time just to make sure that all things are on track. These meetings are also a good time to find out if any of the team members need help.

Lets take a look at some of the tasks to be tackled.

The Site: Probably the first and most important item to get set is to establish a good site. If you are going to use your local club's flying site you have a good start. Be sure that the site can handle the crowd of spectators and pilots you expect. In the case of the Miniature Warbirds we initially used a different club's site each year. This was really neat and generated a "traveling show" type of event but the logistics of moving to a new site each year with a new group to train was tough to handle. Once a permanent site was established things started to get a little easier. Once you have the site confirmed it must be prepared. Parking and camping areas should be set up so as not to interfere with any of the activities. If camping will be on-site, this area should be located away from the spectator and parking lot areas. This will provide some privacy for those who choose to enjoy some peaceful camping along with their model flying. The runway (or runways) needs to be as perfect as possible. If it is asphalt it should be swept clean of all debris each morning prior to the start of the days activities. If it is grass it should be mowed one or two days prior to your publicized arrival date. For the Long Island Qualifier we provided the modeler with a 100 X 700 ft grass runway that was moved so short that even the jet jockeys loved it! This runway had lines painted down each side to delineate the runway boundaries. It also had a dashed line painted down the center to help both the pilots and judges. This grass runway was in the middle of a 350 X 900 grass area that was just a little taller and this whole set-up was within a 125 acre sod farm. Sounds really neat, huh? Nothing turns a modeler off more than a site that is difficult to fly at or is tough on his plane. If you have ever flown at a field that looks like it is routinely used for grenade practice or has power lines or buildings at either end, you know what I mean. The site should also be neat and clean. There should be a number of garbage cans located throughout the area to help keep things clean. If possible these should be emptied at the end of each day. A clean, well laid out site will leave a good impression on all who attend. It's up to the organizing team to get the right people involved who can make your site perfect. A good example is Top Gun. Thanks to Frank Tiano's hard work I don't think you could find a more perfectly prepared field! (Now, if he could only control the wind.....)

Pilots: Any event just can't be successful if it doesn't have any pilots participating in it! How do you get the pilots there? Advertise!! Advertise in magazines that are dedicated to the type of modeler you are trying to attract. Send out flyers (both the printed kind and the flesh-and-blood kind) to clubs within the area you are trying to draw from. Print lots of flyers and distribute them at trade shows and hobby shops. The flyers should contain all the important information about your fly-in. Things like the entry fee, the classes (expert, sportsman, team), the dates, the times, a contact person and directions to the field are real definite things to be included. It's also nice to include hotel and camping information. List a number of hotels and camp sites and their phone numbers. You may also want to state that the pilots may camp on site. If you are planning to do this, list the facilities (or lack thereof) that they can expect. Once you get the pilots to your field treat them as your guests. After all, some of them may have traveled a great distance to attend your event. If they go away unhappy they won't be back next year. You can also be sure their friends will hear about your event, good or bad.

Judges: There are two very important aspects of judging to keep in mind. The judging must be fair and it must be consistent. This is sometimes very difficult to obtain, yet it is do-able. The way we have attempted to accomplish this at the Long Island Qualifier is to hold a judging seminar and a "practice" session for pilots and judges about a month prior to the contest. We ask all pilots in our club that are interested in scale to bring one of there scale ships to the field for a club fun-fly and practice session. We then go through a simulated "contest" doing both static and flying judging. This gives us the chance to polish all the judges and also gives the scale builders and flyers a look at the things they need to work on. We also stress that all judges should add comments to there score sheets. This is a great aid to both the judge and flyer when questions arise as to the validity of a score.

Advertisements: This usually cost money! How do you pay for this? There are a few ways. One is to enlist the aid of some of your team members who may have some talents in the art-work and printing fields. Some times you may be able to obtain some of the needed printed material through donations of either time or money. If this does not provide enough funds then a raffle or other such fund raiser can help. Another way to help offset cost is to have a large spectator crowd.(see "spectators" below) Asking for a "donation" at the parking lot entrance works very well and generally all these spectators are just dying to purchase a raffle ticket or two! All this "extra" money can also help offset the cost of.....

Prizes: If you are going to have a contest you have got to have prizes. These can be in the form of trophies or plaques. You should cover at least the first three places in Expert and Sportsman and first place in Team. If you expect a large turn-out in expert, it is nice to provide a trophy or a plaque for all those who will qualify for the championships. For team please keep in mind that this is a "team" effort. You should provide each member of the wining team with the appropriate trophy or plaque. It is also nice if you can provide some sort of "goodies" also. You know, things like a kit, a radio, an engine, wheels , glue, tools etc. I think you get the idea. One way to decide what prizes to have is to ask your committee members what they would like to get if they were the competitor. Then go looking for these goodies. How do you get all this neat stuff? Three ways: Trophies and plaques you can make, buy or have them donated. In the case of all the other goodies you have two choices: buy them or get them by donation. To get "stuff" by donation takes a little leg work. A few phone calls and a letter of request to any of the manufacturers will generally yield you some nice prizes. If you have done you homework right you'll find you will have enough goodies to give every competitor some sort of prize. Remember that some of these guys may have traveled a good distance. It is always nice to go home with something.

Spectators: It's a lot easier to draw a large crowd of spectators than you think. People just love to see scale models fly. The way to get them to your event is to Advertise (there's that word again) in local newspapers, supermarkets, drugstores etc. Post flyers anywhere people will stop and read the stuff that is usually pinned on bulletin boards. If the budget can stand it, try some TV and radio exposure. Sometimes you can get this free through your local community stations. The people at these stations are very helpful and usually are also quite interested in your event. The TV station may even come down to your field to do some filming for the six o'clock news! This in turn draws more spectators on the following day.

Workforce: This is probably the hardest part of organizing any contest yet it is the most important! If you don't have the workers to support you, you are dead in the water. What you need is a group of dedicated volunteers to take turns sharing different tasks. These tasks will include such things as pilot registration, aircraft safety inspections (you do inspections, don't you?), PA announcer(s), transmitter impound, flight line co-ordination, refreshment stand and the dreaded parking lot attendant. Believe it or not this last one is a very important task. After all, the parking lot volunteer is the first person the general public and pilots will encounter when they arrive at your event. It doesn't help public relations to have the grumpiest person in the club greet your guests. This individual should be a courteous and helpful individual. He must be able to answer the many questions that the general public will have for him and also be able to direct the incoming pilots to the appropriate areas. Remember he is not only an ambassador of your club but he also represents scale modeling as a whole.

Safety: One area that greatly impresses pilots and spectators alike is the way a club treats safety issues. Every attempt possible should be made to lay out the flight line and spectator areas as to avoid any flying over any spectator, parking or camping areas. Separate the runway and the pilot boxes by a safe distance. There is nothing more un-nerving to a competing pilot then to get buzzed by another competitor's aircraft. Pilot meetings should be held at the start of each day to instruct everyone in proper safety issues. These should include such things as the proper flight direction and flying zones. The pilots should be introduced to the flight line boss and informed of his duties and authority. A well organized safety crew will make your contest go smoothly.

Crowd Information: Another area that greatly enhances any event is a good PA announcer; two are even better. These guys can keep the crowd informed as to what they are seeing. In the case of

our Miniature Warbirds Fly-In and Top Gun the PA guys are well versed in the type of aircraft that participates in the event. They are also well armed with a number of reference books to help them out should someone show up with an obscure WWII model. The speaker system should be adequate enough to cover the area involved. The speakers should be dispersed throughout the spectator area, not just located in front of everybody.

Layout: A well laid out spectator area is an important consideration at your event. Things like the refreshment stand and the port-o-lavs should be located in logical areas that will not interfere with the activities. The layout should provide for good unobscured viewing areas for the public without inconveniencing the pilots. At the Miniature Warbirds Fly-In we have provided these areas by putting joggles in the spectator fence spaced approximately every 75 to 100 feet. These areas jut out even with the edge of the tarps that are set up in the pit area. Not only does this give the spectator a better view of the flying but it also gives him a feeling of being right in the middle of the event and part of it. At Top Gun, well what can you say. This is the ultimate set-up for the spectator.

As you can see there are a lot of things to consider in organizing a scale contest. The first event is always the toughest but you'll find that after all is done everyone has had a great time. If you are lucky enough to continue year after year you'll find that you have discovered a new aspect of our hobby, one that forms new friendships and generates a new feeling of satisfaction. You'll find yourself looking forward to that contest year after year!