

1980 WORLD AEROBATIC CHAMPIONSHIPS — FROM A CANADIAN FAN

Story and Photos by Dan Mackie

There must be a corollary to Murphy's Law, somewhere, that states, "If there is going to be an aerobatic contest, there is going to be bad weather." Anyway, that's how it went at Oshkosh, mostly during the Big Event.

To those of us who have read, longingly, about WAC over the past decade or two (who's counting?) the Wisconsin event represented a dream come true — a chance to watch the big guns, all gathered close to home, within easy reach of the pocketbook. Great theory, but you should see the state of our pocketbook after ten days on the road! Oh well, it seemed like fun at the time.

Foremost in everyone's minds, of course, was the East-West challenge that had built up over the years. The teams to beat were Russia, Czechoslovakia, and the U.S. of A. All other western countries had hopes of becoming the Cinderella Country. Barring that, it was pretty well universally hoped that the U.S. boys would at least take the Russians. While the Czechs may not be from the Western World, they had at least proven in 1978 that they could run a fair contest in sharp contrast to the Russians.

Sadly, both the Russians and Czechs declined at the last moment "for technical and financial reasons". In fact, no East European countries competed at all. While many thought that the boycott of the Moscow Olympics had an influence on their decision, a reliable source told us that the Russians lost three pilots as a result of wing failures in their airplanes. And it is well known that the Czechs are a tad short of western currency.

Did all of those missing East Europeans mean a dearth of exotic machines? Not quite. We still got treated to the grace of a Zlin 50L — Manfred Stroessenreuther



Manfried Stroessenreuther, West Germany, Zlin 50L.

from West Germany flew one. While it wasn't the new 300 hp model promised by the Czechs, rumor has it that the German-based Zlin magically extracts about 295 hp from that 260 hp Lycoming. Tsk! Tsk! Judging by the way Henry Haigh's Super Pitts climbed out, it suggested that just airframe lightening and clean-up wasn't responsible there, either! Louis Peña of France and Eric Mueller of Switzerland shared the new CAP 21, a real beauty with tapered wings and glass landing gear. There was a whole gaggle of CAP 20L's and all manner of souped up Pitts. Most notable redesigns were the Week's Special, of course, and Frank Jenkinson from Toronto sported a redesign so new that it was still in Silver paint. And then there was the Lazar 200, Leo Loudenslager's proud bird, determined as ever to outdo a Pitts.

A common theme among the entrants from far off was the frequency of U.S. registrations. As often as not, rented aircraft were used in order to save costs. Swiss pilots, Christian Schweitzer and Michel Brandt, for example, used a factory Christen Eagle. The German Pitts had to be U.S.-registered to beat their bureaucracy, another problem that plagues many countries.

It is always a pleasure to see the individual development possible in the States, because of the relative freedom from bureaucratic restraint, allowing for all manner of innovations. In Germany, however, experimental birds are **verbotten**. One cannot even prop a plane — it is illegal — and if you want to do aerobatics, it must be on a flight plan. The Swiss team has to practice in France because of restrictive anti-noise regulations.



Ladislav Bezak and Charlie Hillard.



(Photo by Dan Mackie)
CAP 21 - flown by L. Peña and Karl Mueller.