

## Historic T-6 Racers *Complete Package* Racing Histories

This document contains a brief history on the T-6 class of air racing, which is represented within this package. It is with utmost respect and honor that we acknowledge the pilots which have reached the eternal blue skies of the heavens while commanding their aircraft. This document is dedicated to those souls.

**When** air racing made it's way into the post-war era, it was natural that the T-6 would find it's place among the pylons. First appearing at the National Air Races in Cleveland, Ohio, the T-6 would make up the exclusive woman's class of pylon racing. Marge Hurlbert would pilot her modified race #81 to 1<sup>st</sup> place, at an average speed of 200mph!



During this time, women were not permitted to compete in the faster and more popular events. Hurlbert would be killed in an airshow accident before the races of '47.

The aircraft were allowed more radical modifications at Cleveland, and as a result the aircraft looked pretty exotic, including one powered by the inline Ranger engine!

In '47 Ruth Johnson would fly her race #75 to 1<sup>st</sup>, with her speed topping 223mph

The '48 Races would see greater speeds then ever before, with Grace Harris taking home the trophy at just under a blistering 235mph!

Though flying respectfully with the T-6/Harvard class of air racing, which was being promoted by Kendall, the ladies class wasn't gaining popularity, and by 1949 no sponsor would step forward to brand the T-6 class. The air racing management would provide the purse for '49.



For the races in 1949, Grace Harris once again took 1<sup>st</sup> place. However the competition was dwindling.

**Meanwhile**, women such as Jacqueline Cochran, a much accredited, and record setting pilot, were still not allowed to compete within what was essentially the 'Unlimited' division, which made up the famed race for the Thompson Trophy. Cochran owned one of the hottest aircraft around, which was a highly modified P-51C called the 'Beguine'. She hired Bill Odem as the race pilot of this extremely modified aircraft. The ill-fated Thompson Trophy of '49 would be remembered for the accident, in which Odem lost control of the Mustang, and hit a nearby home which had just recently been constructed. Odem was killed, as well as a young mother and her infant child. The accident would leave a bitter taste in the minds of many, and races on such a scale as this would not again be seen again at Cleveland.

If women had been included into all classes of competition, it is hard to tell what may have become of pylon racing through the 1950's.

**Unlimited** races would only return under the vision of Bill Stead, when he revived the spirit of the National Air Races, and brought them to Reno in 1964. For 1964-65, the Reno air races would be conducted at the somewhat crude Sky Ranch facility.

**T-6's** would not again be seen racing until 1968. By this time the races had been moved to the now closed airbase outside of town, called Reno/Stead. These air races, now officially dubbed the National Championship, would be the first to feature the T-6 class again, since the 1949 event in Cleveland. Now restricted to essentially stock aircraft, the class would prove popular with the loud roar of the Pratt & Whitney R-1340, and evenly matched competition. Race speeds would only top 180mph on the 3 mile course. However it was sure, the T-6 class was now a symbolic figure of the new air race scene, and would eventually become a staple of the event.

In 1969 the T-6 class would race at Ft. Lauderdale FL., St. Louis MO., Cleveland OH., and at Reno. Speeds would be increased to upwards of 200mph at Reno, with Ben Hall flying his Harvard Mk.II, #7 "Miss Meridian Pavers" to a first in both qualifying, and the final Gold race.

In 1970 the T-6's would race at Alton, Illinois. Bob Mitchem would post record speeds on the very small course. However the Texan's would race at Reno for '70.



1971 would feature several T-6 races across the country. Starting with a battle at Wilson North Carolina. Richard Minges would be the victor, however this would be the last championship. At Cape-May New Jersey, in June of '71, there would be a devastating blow to air racing, and the T-6 class. During a heat race, Minges would collide with Don Barrett. Minges would crash fatally, while Barrett managed to land without incident. Shortly after completing one of the 3 miles laps, three more T-6's would collide, with the aircraft falling into an adjacent wooded area. All three pilots would be killed. So the Cape-May races had claimed the lives of four; Richard Minges, 34, of Fayetteville, N.C.; Victor Baker, 43, of Glendale, Calif., a lawyer; Ed Snyder, 47, of Jacksonville Fla., an electrical engineer and Joseph Quiun, 39, of Saugus, Calif. The races would continue, with Bob Mitchem claiming the title.

**At Reno** for '71, 24 entries would qualify. They were split into four races, the Gold medal, Consolation, Medallion, and the 'Make-up' race consisting of the slowest aircraft. There would be no heats, with races being flown Fri-Sun. Bob Mitchem would post a new qualifying record of 213.86mph, and a race record of 205.85mph. His aircraft went either by 'Mitchem Special', or "Miss Colorado", race #94.

1972 brought the T-6 class back to Wilson, NC. But only with 6 pilots. Hugh Alexander won both time trials, and the race.

At Reno, another large and colorful field would return. Mitchem's aircraft would now be raced as #44, by John Mosby, as Bob would move to the Unlimited class in his FG-1D Corsair. Mosby posted top qualifying position at 210mph, and would finish 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Gold, behind Mac McClain in race #25. Mosby had previously raced another #44 called 'Sky Prints Special', N1395N.



Photo of N194A when owned by John Mosby. Previously owned by Bob Mitchem

In 1973, T-6's would race at Miami FL, Reno, NV, and Mojave CA. Jim Mott would decorate the Reno pylons with his 'Tar Baby', race #42, qualifying 1<sup>st</sup> place and racing in a close 2<sup>nd</sup> to Bill Turnbull in his #72 'Terrible Texan'.



Jim Mott's high-gloss 'Tar Baby' would be a top contender. Photo by: Shawn Aro

Many of the T-6's that raced in the '70's, would continue racing right through modern time, and some continue to race today. Such is the example of McClain's race #5 'Red Baron' which would qualify 1<sup>st</sup> in '74, as well as Pat Palmer's #9 'Gotcha', which won 1<sup>st</sup> in the Gold that year. Today these aircraft are known as "Big Red", and "Lickety Split", both of which have raced in recent years. Palmer would bring confusion in 1975, when he brought another T-6, race #99, and also wore the name 'Gotcha'. #9 would then be called 'CUM'N THRU.' Both aircraft would prove competitive, and Palmer would win three consecutive championships between the two aircraft.

1975 would bring the first T-6 fatality at Reno, since it's start in '68. M.D. Washburn, flying his race #12 'Miss Houston', would strike pylon 1 with his left wing on the first lap of Heat 2. The aircraft rolled inverted, and struck the ground.

There would be another T-6 fatality in the 1978 race, involving two aircraft which collided near pylon 5, killing Don DeWalt flying his T-6 #74 'Exorcist' and Prian Dimitry, flying his T-6 #8 'Miss Fertile Turtle'. It was at this time, that the championship race would then be reduced from 8, to 5 laps.



Ralph Rina would win the championship in 1978, in #73 "Miss Everything". However with the loss of DeWalt, and Dimitry, the victory would be bitter-sweet. As a result, there would be no T-6 races at Reno in 1979-1980.

For 1981, a new course would be arranged for the T-6 class. Now a larger 5.21 miles, as opposed to the previous 3 mile oval. (and larger than the 3.76 mile course at Mojave). A new qualifying record of 217.51mph would be set by Mosby in #44 'Miss Behavin', and 5 of the 6 Gold racers would exceed the previous race record, with Mosby winning at 222.78mph! Note; only 4 laps would be flown for the championship in 1981. This would be extended to 5 laps for '82. 1981 would also be the first year for Alfred Goss, and his #75 'Warlock'. A name, and an aircraft that would become household in air racing circles in the years to come.

Ralph Twombly would take over racing duties for Mosby, racing #44 in the '82 races, and posting top qualifying position, winning his heat, and the Gold championship.

Records would again be broken In 1983, with Ralph Rina qualifying 1<sup>st</sup> at 225.26mph. Three aircraft would submit race records, and a new winner declared with Richard Sykes and 'The Mystery Ship', #14 taking first place in the Gold at 225.94mph..

1984 would be the crowning year for Ralph Rina, as he would again qualify 1<sup>st</sup> place, and this time win the Gold championship, finishing ahead of Dennis Buehn in #18 'Thunderbolt', and Jim Mott in his re-named #42 'Mis-Chief'. (His Sea Fury would be known as 'Super Chief'.) An interesting note in 1984

would be that the 1<sup>st</sup> place of the Silver race would post a slightly higher speed. This being Jerry McDonald in his #5 'Big Red'. It's worthy to note that starting in '84, all T-6 championship races would be set to 6 laps.

#18 'Thunderbolt' would be the aircraft to beat in 1985, with Rookie pilot Randy Difani at the controls. He would be top qualifier, and also win the Gold race. Again McDonald would take Silver with faster race averages than the Gold race!

**New competition** would emerge in 1986, as Robert Heale would surprise the class, posting top qualifying speed in #9, now 'Lickety Split', with Eddie Van Fossen at a close 2<sup>nd</sup> in his #27 'Miss TNT'. Van Fossen would win the Gold at a striking 223.45mph. It's interesting to find that in two years, Van Fossen would emerge from this middle of the pack, and become a formidable contender in the T-6 class for consecutive years.

**Van Fossen** and 'Miss TNT' would take a new lap speed record during qualifying in '87, posting 230.382mph. He would also take Gold. For '88 it would be a repeat, now raising the qualifying record to 232.114mph. Again taking the Gold championship.



**Another new kid** was on the block though, and by 1989 there was a fierce battle for the Gold being fought between Van Fossen, and Tom Dwelle in #7 'Tinkertoy'. They would qualify 1-2 within .4 seconds of each other, and the upset would fall to Dwelle who secured the Gold race at 222.326mph. In the hunt for third was Al Goss and #75 'Warlock'.

**These three** would arrange themselves again during the time trials for 1990, with #27, #7, and #75 posting 1-2-3, and only separated by a second. But again Tom Dwelle would snatch the Gold. But this

time, Goss would be a close second place. An honorable mention would be Nick Macy and 'Six-Cat' tightening the gap for 4<sup>th</sup> place. The T-6 class was proving to be top entertainment for the crowds, boasting close racing action, and many thrills.

The races for '91 started with Goss and 'Warlock', *locking* themselves into 1<sup>st</sup> position during qualifying. But again, Goss would be defeated by stiff competition in the Gold, being satisfied with 2<sup>nd</sup> place to Van Fossen and 'Miss TNT', which again took 1<sup>st</sup>. Heavy into the battle by now, were Kenny Day and #22 'Catch 22', and Charles Hutchins with #21 'Mystical Power'. Also gaining momentum was Sherman Smoot, and #86 'Bad Company'. More on these later..

The domination of the early 90's would be that of Van Fossen and 'Miss TNT'. Winning Reno Gold in '92-'94. '94 would be the last year of competition for race #27. Van fossen set the standard high for competition. Sept. 18<sup>th</sup> of 1994, as the aircraft came down the chute for the race start, and just as the pace plane announced the start of the race there was a mid-air collision between #41 flown by Ralph Twombly, and #5 'Big Red' being flown by Jerry McDonald. The Left wing of Twombly's racer separated, and came over fuselage, as the aircraft plummeted to the ground, striking a nearby vacant house. Twombly was pronounced dead at the scene. McDonald was able to continue straight in to runway 08, and land safely, with portions of the left wing-tip gone, and the left aileron detached. The ring wing leading edge had suffered damage, as well as the propeller. This stands to the skill of McDonald to guide the aircraft in without incident.

For 1995, Charles Hutchins and #21 'Mystical Power' would prove to be a force to be reckoned with. Qualifying at just over 230mph, and winning the Gold just ahead of Smoot in #86 'Bad Company'. The Gold averaged 231mph, and the two aircraft divided by just 1/5<sup>th</sup> of a second.



1996 provided Sherman Smoot with the opportunity to take charge, and he did! Qualifying his #86 'Bad Company' 1<sup>st</sup> at 229.895mph, and winning the Gold at 221.677mph. Smoot would sell #86 to Jack Frost.

Frost would race the aircraft as #47 'Frost Bite' in 1997. Meanwhile Smoot turned his attention to the once 'Perestroika' Yak-11. He would bring the fast Yak back to Reno in 1998 as 'Czech Mate'.

'Mystical power' would reign in '98, but this time at the hands of a Lady pilot. Mary Dilda would race #21, being top qualifier, and Gold champion. She also got to race 1-2 with her husband Steve Dilda, in #22 'Two of Hearts' during Heat 1A. She stayed ahead of Steve at the end by a considerable margin. It was said that Mary could fly the airplane 10mph faster, just because she was that good!

**1999** Would bring yet another new victor. Nick Macy and #6 'Six-Cat' would begin another standard of speed. Posting fastest times in qualifying, and a victory on Sunday. Followed closely by Tom Campau, who would race #21. 3<sup>rd</sup> was Mary Dilda in #22.

**Macy** would again dominate in 2000. The rivalry between Macy/Campau had started, and waiting to strike was Goss and #75 'Warlock'. The Races would be canceled for 2001 due to the events at the World Trade Center.

**Returning in 2002** would be the trio of dark-colored sixes. Qualifying #21, #75, #6. Campau would win his first Gold in #21, with Macy again in striking distance, and followed in 3<sup>rd</sup> by Goss and 'Warlock'.

**The lady** would be back on the prowl in 2003, taking 'Two of Hearts' to an outstanding 239.398mph to secure 1<sup>st</sup> position. It's noteworthy that the method used to calculate course distance had changed for '03, and all subsequent races. Giving the impression of slightly more speed, the new method is actually more accurate to true groundspeed, calculating a race path rather than measured in point-to-point distance. Macy and 'Six-Cat' would be the champions on Sunday, with Mary Dilda in 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**After much work**, and years of racing. 2004 would finally be the year of Team Warlock. Goss would qualify in the 1<sup>st</sup> position again, but this time he would remain the aircraft to beat winning both race Heats, and at last the coveted Gold. Again Dilda would bring up 2<sup>nd</sup> in 'Two of Hearts'.

**2005** would again bring 1<sup>st</sup> spot to Goss, and he would also set a new race record of 239.865mph in Heat 1A. However come time for the championship, it would be Mary Dilda and that bright blue #22 sneaking into a Gold trophy. It was now plain to see, that the race for 1<sup>st</sup> was between many an aircraft and pilot, and you just couldn't be sure how the dice would fall!

**2006** would bring another fast T-6 to the scene, being #43 'Midnight Miss III', and being flown by owner Dennis Beuhn. #43 would qualify 3<sup>rd</sup>, and place 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Gold behind Macy, taking the Gold again in 'Six-Cat'.

**Beuhn** would gain the top spot, and keep it in '07. Securing 1<sup>st</sup> in qualifying, 1<sup>st</sup> in both heats, and 1<sup>st</sup> in the Gold on Sunday. Beuhn has become a crowd favorite, bringing several T-6's to Reno each year, always wearing attractive paint schemes.

**Macy** would again raise the standard for 2008, posting 243.083mph in qualifying. Ken Dwelle would take Gold with a new class record with a race average of 244.523mph!

**For 2009** Macy would again repeat top spot in qualifying, and also take the Gold. 2010 would also bring #6 to the top of the list, again raising the record, this time with a lap speed of 244.539mph. However in Saturday's Gold Heat 2, Macy would be disqualified due to cutting the deadline. On Sunday, the final results would be determined by pairings, as a result of high winds. This put the official Gold champion for '10 as Beuhn once again with 'Midnight Miss III'.

**The 2011** events would be canceled after the tragedy in the Unlimited class Heat 2A on Fri. 9/16.

The rivalry is strengthened in 2012, between Macy and Beuhn. 'Six-Cat' would lead the way yet again though, and on Sunday Macy would post an outstanding 247.317 race *average*, another race record. If this didn't boost the motivation for Beuhn to take back the Gold, nothing would.



In 2013 Beuhn would have his opportunity. For although Macy would again qualify 1<sup>st</sup>, he would also lose his engine in Gold heat 1. This would place Beuhn in the front for the second Heat, and ultimately the Gold. #43 'Midnight Miss III' would have no problem claiming the championship.



Dennis Beuhn speaks to his crew, after the 2012 Gold Race





N711SQ at Orlando, Florida. Circa. 1980

### **Pace-Plane**

In honor of Rosie O' Grady's Flying Circus, we have selected this historic livery for the FASA T-6 class pace plane. It was only fitting that a brief history of this significant aircraft be given.



Fairly represented within FSX, the re-created O' Grady's SKY WRITER

- **HISTORY**

**Type:** North American SNJ-4 Texan

**Name:** (known only as that of Rosie O' Grady's)

**Registration:** N711SQ

**BuNo:** 27433

**Race:** n/a

**Pilot:** Robert Favreau

Rosie O' Grady's acquired the aircraft in the mid 1970's, and operated it as part of their Flying Circus Sky Writing routine. The aircraft was just one of many operated when Rosie O Grady's Good Time Emporium was in the swing of things back in Orlando, Fl. In the 70's-80's.

Details of the aircraft, and personal recollections were reported to us by Alan Wengren, who lived in Orlando during the hey-day of the Circus. "...Rosie's was also known as Church Street Station back in the days."

In May 1st of 1987, N711SQ was involved in a fatal mid-air collision with a Cessna 310, about 3,000ft above Orlando. The NTSB reported that the air traffic control experienced failure to monitor and conduct traffic, having approved 1SQ to a decent of 1,500ft, and to conduct operations within immediate traffic of Cessna N8716K. Robert Favreau, pilot of the Texan, and the Cessna pilot in command Bernard LeFils, along with his wife and son, were killed.

Heavy lawsuits toward the FAA, and ATC ensued on behalf of both Favreau's widow, and the family of Lefils.

N711SQ will be remembered for it's artistic and stunning aerial display over the skies of Florida. One of the original true 'Sky Writers'.

In respect to Rosie O' Grady's Flying Circus, and the pilots involved in their airshow routine, FASA has chose to represent N711SQ as the official pace-plane of the T-6 class, for air racing conducted with the FSX Air Sports Association.



## Other History

Another historic mention, 'Big Red', Circa. 1993. We represent 'Big Red' in it's livery per Reno '93, while owned by Jerry McDonald. McDonald passed away on January 1, 2014. *Blue Skies Jerry!*



'Big red' shown here in the pits early in race week, 1993.'Big Red' within FSX

- HISTORY

**Type:** North American SNJ-4 Texan

**Name:** Big Red

**Registration:** N7404C

**BuNo:** 51542

**Race:** 5

**Pilot:** Mac McClain, Jerry McDonald, Jimmy Gist, Joey Sanders

N7404C first raced at the hands of Mac McClain, Reno 1972. It wore the name 'Miss Eufaula', carried race #25, and was painted in a bright orange color, with black/white checkerboard cowling and rudder. McClain would qualify in 3<sup>rd</sup> position for the '72 race, and win the Gold race at a average speed of 201.59mph. A good start for this historic racer.

'74 would be another big appearance for the racer. Now promoting Ed Browning, and named 'Red Baron', the aircraft was painted in an attractive red scheme, and wore the race #5. (Matching Browning's Unlimited P-51 entry of the same name). McClain would qualify 1<sup>st</sup> at Reno, and finish in 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Gold race. The aircraft would later appear when the T-6 class re-instituted racing at Reno in '81. Now owned by Jerry McDonald, and given the name 'Big Red', yet still carrying the race #5.

Over the years, the aircraft has appeared virtually the same, and has seen the race circuit at nearly every running. 'Big Red' wouldn't again see a Gold race victory, how it has remained a strong contender in the Silver races, and has semi-frequently flown in Gold races as well.

Today, the aircraft is owned and operated by Gordo (Joey) Sanders/Sanders Racing Inc, Jasper, AL.



#5 'Big-Red' pictured on the ramp during the dawn, Reno 2013.



Painted props are not an un-common sight in the T-6 class





'Six-Cat' patiently waiting on the ramp prior to a heat race in 2012



'Tinkertoy', Race #7 circa mid 90's.



'Two of Hearts, Race #22 circa 1996.



'Sixshooter, Race #44 circa 2012.'Red Knight, Race #64



T-6 pit row, Reno 2012

This brief history of the T-6 class of air racing, is made possible by the generous historians, and photographers of air racing.

**Special thanks to:**

Alan Wengren,  
Randy Goss  
Shawn Aro  
Ralph Rina.

The assembly of facts and figures for this document, was done by members of the FSX Air Sports Association. [www.fsxairsports.com](http://www.fsxairsports.com)