



U.S. Scale Masters



GRAND FINALE

The first-ever Masters Champion is crowned in a weekend of highly competitive flying among the best fliers in the country. Staff Report

Photos by J. R. Naidish

"Mission To Mile Square"

(To the tune of
"Wabash Cannonball")

Fountain Valley Tower, 1/8th Air
Force here,
Requesting landing clearance . . .
Hide the women—hide the beer.
We've heard that there's a mighty
meet,
Biggest of the year.
With all the best in U.S. Scale
invited to appear.

We've brought our very best pilots,
To share in all the fun,
And you know we'll do our damndest
To come out Number One.

There's Captain Kent,
and Colonel Bob,
They've armed their birds of war . . .
Ol' Dan from Albuquerque,
And listen up, there's more!

These lyrics, written especially for the occasion of the first annual U.S. Scale Masters Championships by Phoenix's Al Casey, proved to be the highlight of the Saturday night banquet. But to start the story on

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We've brought our man from
Texas
He's new to the Mile Square scene.
Ted White's his name—
from Dallas—

And watch him boys, he's mean!
The ground support crew's present,
Pit lizards, callers and all . . .
And we have come prepared to really
Have ourselves a ball.

Refrain:

*Listen to the rumble,
The rattle and the roar,
As the 1/8th Air Force scrambles . . .
Climbing from the Valley floor.*

We'll do our best to beat your best,
And if that's not to be,
We'll know that we have flown
against

The best we've ever seen.
Our thanks to the Scale Squadron,
Harris, Bob, Bert, Denny and
Shane
And you can bet your goggles
That we'll be back again.
You've treated us so royally,
Year after year,

That there's no place we'd rather fly
In all the West than here . . .
(Except, of course, for Phoenix).

Refrain:

*Listen to the rumble,
The rattle and the roar,
As the 1/8th Air Force scrambles . . .
Climbing from the Valley floor.*

We'll do our best to beat your best,
And if that's not to be,
We know that we've attended
The best meet in history.

Saturday night would be to get ahead of the tale; however, it's worthy of note that the mood of the song properly expresses the feelings shared by all the contestants . . . it was "the best meet in history."

"Firsts" in anything always seem to generate their own excitement . . . philatelists drool over a first-issue stamp, and numismatists go crazy over those mint coins. We always revere the "first-to-complete-any-

1. The Grand Champion of the United States in Sport Scale is Arizona's "Cowboy" Kent Walters. 2. Earl Thompson's Focke Wulf FW-44J took a hotly disputed first place in AMA Precision Scale. 3. The jets took their share of trophies, with Bob Violett (right) taking second place with his A-4D, and Tom Cook finishing fifth with his F-4 Phantom. 4. Jemco's Jim Meister had the highest static score with his SBD-5, but he could only fly to third place because of mechanical difficulties. 5. Ted White came from Texas to pin down a fourth place with his M.B.-5.

task" syndrome: first to climb Mount Everest, to the South (or North) Pole, etc. How many of us really know (or really care about) the second man who crossed the Atlantic? Being first is always newsworthy, and the U.S. Scale Masters Championships was the first national competition generated, promoted and organized by the scale fliers, themselves.

Maybe it wasn't just the fact that this was the first time that the scale fliers got together to select their own champion that made this an important weekend of flying . . . the fact that it was one of the best weekends of head-to-head competi-

The details on Kent Walters' Dauntless were truly outstanding.

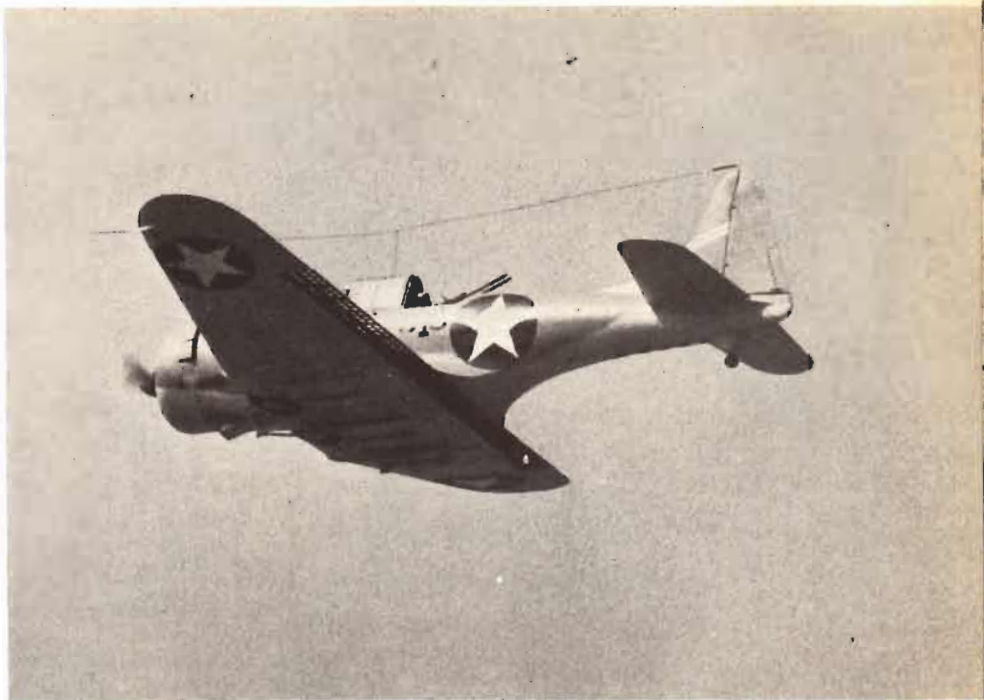


tion certainly is important. The Southern California Scale Squadron—who hosted the first “invitational” finals—set out to run one of the smoothest scale contests ever. We’ll see how well they succeeded (or failed).

The concept of a Masters is nothing revolutionary or new. It’s been done in Pattern for years, and the system of eliminations is used in everything from baseball to bowling. It was originally decided to have a group of regional qualifying fly-offs to narrow down the field of potential entrants in the big finals. There were originally five events slated, each in a geographic area (Florida, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and California). This would give most of the fliers in the country a chance to qualify. Later, the AMA graciously agreed to cooperate by designating the AMA Nats as a qualifying event. This meant that 30 pilots (five from each region) would be coming to California in October.

The thrust of such a program is to not only keep the big final fly-off closely controlled, so that each flier can receive the maximum in services and attention (good quality control), but also this eliminations system helps to ameliorate the element of luck in selecting a national Scale Champion. Lady Luck still has some influence, as this report will show, but an eliminations system lessens the chance that some rank upstart could manage a few good flights and win all the marbles.

While all of the glory seems to go to the “firsts” in this world, the very fact that no one has set any precedent or plowed the acreage before means that the going might be a little shaky the first time around. The planning that goes into a contest of this size is staggeringly monumental. Not only are you trying to make all the plans for the actual Masters fly-off, but you are faced with the coordination of all the regional events. Harris Lee virtually tackled this job as a one-man dervish, making phone calls, writing letters, etc. The Scale Squadron chipped in, but it soon became apparent that it was the typical case of “the few doing too too much.” Those clubs who inherit the task of running the Masters in the future (the finals is passed from club-to-club on a rotating basis, with the 1981 event scheduled for the Mint Julep crowd in Kentucky) will have to be cognizant of the amount of work involved, and be prepared to have the spirited teamwork of every club member.



Kent Walters' Dauntless flew so flawlessly that his average score for the contest's six flights was over 90!

Thus, while the desire for achieving a perfect meet was there within the Squadron, there were some details which fell by the wayside. The invitations to those who qualified in the various regionals didn't go out as promptly as they should have, and many fliers found themselves invited to a contest without sufficient vacation time remaining. Then there's always the cost factor, and airline prices for crosscountry flights were exorbitant. A few fliers wiped out their first-line aircraft only days before the event, as it all turned out, there were only 21 Sport Scale entrants on board in California for the three-day event. However, when the word gets out of the success of the first Masters, we have a feeling that next year's event will have a full attendance.

The Scale Squadron was very aware of the difficulties inherent in having a West Coast site for the first Masters. Through various fund raising efforts, enough money was raised to pay half fare to the judges and officials. It was believed that the only way to conduct a fair and impartial contest was to avoid any suggestion of local favoritism. Each of the regional events was asked to send two representatives, one to act as a static judge and the other to flight judge. As it turned out, some last minute cancellations made this impossible, but there were still representative judges from several other states.

Speaking of fund raising, that was

one of the most difficult areas of the event. It was decided early in the game that sponsorship would be solicited on a cash-only basis. The idea of having to hand out packages of clevises, covering materials, etc., would somehow not be fitting of the stature of a Masters event. While major contributions by Futaba, Byron Originals, World Engines, K&B, Bridi Hobbies, Jet Hangar Hobbies, Ellco Plastics and several other manufacturers were a big boost to the event, it is hoped that next year will see a more supportive role from the industry which always profits from major events of this sort.

Because of field restrictions at the flying site, direct solicitations of money are prohibited, so it was difficult for the Squadron to get much benefit from the tickets that were available from the national raffle which was going on. *Scale R/C Modeler* had contributed two Caribbean cruises for two people each as prizes for the raffle. These were valued at about \$1,000 for each prize. Tickets were sold at Toledo, and hawked by the major clubs in the regionals. As it turned out, the big drawing revealed both winners as living within 50 miles of the contest site!

Scale R/C Modeler also donated the first and second place trophies in AMA and Sport Scale. By a special arrangement, the magazine donated 25 beautiful bronze eagles as recognition trophies to all the fliers who achieved the honor of qualifying for the Masters. Even these trophies were valued at \$40 each, so there was definitely no lack of hardware, and everyone went home with



The look of determination on Violett's face tells the story. He went without sleep in order to rebuild . . . and earned a second place trophy.

a trophy. The Masters also received significant exposure in all the magazines. Numerous ads appeared in all the hobby publications, and the cooperation of the modeling press was a contributing factor to the success of the meet.

Actually, it was one of the prizes that evolved into one of the numerous human interest stories of the meet. "Cowboy" Kent Walters who, as the song says "armed his bird of war" for the contest, had expressed a need for a new radio. He was building a huge B-17, and he had often said that he'd love to get a Futaba radio for the monster bomber. As it turned out, Futaba offered a deluxe 8-channel rig as one of the prizes for the Masters. You could see the motivation in Kent's eyes from the beginning of the first flight . . . he had his mind and heart set on that radio!

Because everyone knew that the contest would most likely be decided in the air, it was agreed that there should be three days set aside for the contest. Friday would be

strictly for static judging, and also give the fliers and their families a chance to get to see a bit of Southern California (the headquarters was across the street from Disneyland). With this system, Bert Baker the contest C.D., would have Friday evening to check all the scores, and to correct any apparent deficiencies prior to the first flight on Saturday.

The wisdom of this was obvious when the static scores began appearing on the toteboard. By having an eliminations system, the one problem would be that only the best-of-the-best would be in attendance. This meant that the scores would be very close. No one realized how close until the scoreboard revealed a 6½ point spread in static scores among all 21 contestants. This would have been even less, had not Frank Tiano's P-51 been possibly misjudged. The Mustang was the first model into the circles, and it was an issue as to whether the judges started out scoring a bit on the low side. Aside from that incident, the judging was very consistent, with all the points ranging from 90 to 96.5. Jim Meister led the league, with his SBD Dauntless grabbing the highest static score. This was no

surprise, since he had virtually walked away with his regional event.

The cast of demi-gods who attended this Olympian event was impressive. From Florida came Bob Violett and Art Johnson. Bob was campaigning his A-4D (wait till you hear the story of this man's battle to gain a trophy . . . it's truly one of the human sagas of the weekend). From Missouri came Tom Cook, with one of the most spectacular machines ever. His huge F-4 Phantom was the biggest model there, and it was powered by twin ducted fans.

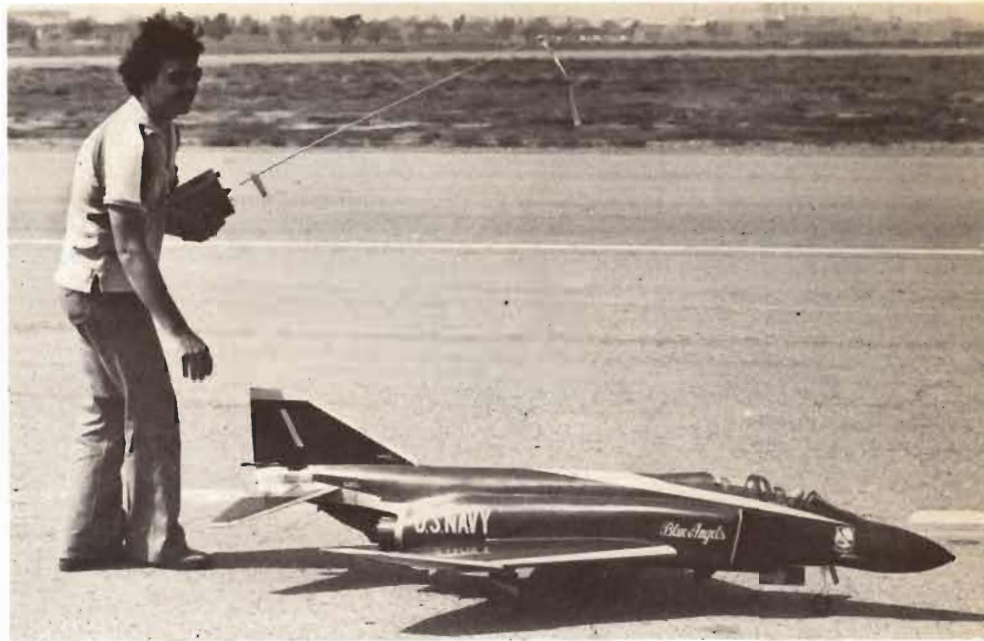
Ed Izzo and his charming wife traveled from Massachusetts to campaign an immaculate Focke Wulf FW-190. Ed is an old Pattern flier, which may have been his nemesis, for his model didn't rely heavily on any "trick" gadgetry . . . and one of the real lessons of this event was that just having a spectacular scale model isn't enough, nor will just flying well-executed maneuvers do the job. You need a competitive edge . . . whether it be bomb dropping, or a drogue chute, there has to be that certain extra which elevates your model above the rest in the judges' eyes.

Let's face it, in a contest of this

calibre, all the models are essentially identical in quality, and it takes a better-looking banana to whet the judges' appetite. At the Masters, the second, fourth and sixth place machines were ducted fans (a trend that was echoed at this year's Nats). As a matter of fact, the only "stock" machine to place in the top five was Ted White's Martin Baker M.B. 5 (Ted's superior flying is what accounted for that trophy).

Anyone who says that WW II is dead better change their thinking. Except for the ducted fans, all of the machines in the top ten were WW II fighters. There were the usual P-47s, F4Us, Spitfires and P-51s in the crowd. What separated them from the models you usually see at contests is that they were either from scratch, or so modified that to call them a kit was to pay the manufacturers an unnecessary compliment.

Frank Tiano, from New York, and Phil Sibille from Virginia, rounded out the East Coast contingent. Garland Hamilton came from Denver, with a superb Corsair. As mentioned in the song lyrics, Ted White was there from Texas, and Dan Parsons came from Albuquerque. Of course, we musn't forget the group from



This shot gives some perspective of the size of Tom Cook's big Phantom.

Phoenix, who travel in such numbers that they generated their own crowd.

In a contest so closely scored, what kind of strategy do you use? Do you play the conservative role, waiting for the other guy to make that critical mistake? Or, should one

approach it with a "go for broke" attitude? It was pretty obvious that no one was viewing the weekend with any caution, for they all knew that it was strictly a put-up-or-shut-up contest.

Out of such an attitude came some true stories of the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. What tales there were of the fickle finger of

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That drogue chute deployment upon landing was certainly a crowd pleaser, and it helped get Tom a fifth place trophy.

fate, as engine problems plagued Phil Sibille's gorgeous Spitfire, or when Jerry Ortega's radio problems continued to haunt him (even after getting a virtually handmade radio for the contest). Then there's Art Johnson, who drove all the way across the country to compete with

his big F-82 Twin Mustang. On Sunday, Art wasn't anywhere to be found, and we were told that he had gotten ill during the night, and had decided to drive back to Florida. We thought no more of it, but later learned that he spent three weeks in a California hospital, with a bad case of pneumonia!

But maybe the real saga of sportsmanship which typifies the spirit of this contest was Bob Violett's struggle toward victory. Bob's first

landing with the A-4D was a real bouncer, and the jet finally got into a pogo situation from which Violett decided to try a go-around. He poured the coals to it, but the model was hanging with the nose straight up. The inevitable snap really tore up the airframe, but Bob had no intention of calling it quits. Larry Wolfe, proprietor of Jet Hangar Hobbies and a business competitor of Violett's, offered the use of his shop. With John Brodbeck Jr. to assist, Bob set out on an all-day repair session.

Such sportsmanship between rivals set a definite upbeat tone for the whole contest, and Bob's determination underscored the importance all the fliers placed on winning this meet. Violett did successfully complete the repairs and managed to get in a flight in the last round on Saturday . . . but the story doesn't end there. Bob *again* smacked the A-4 on landing, and Larry's shop was again pressed into service, as Bob settled in for an all-night repair session. Bob showed up on Sunday with a really scarred and battered looking model, but he then proceeded to turn in some of the highest flight scores of the meet, with a 92.5 and

(Continued from page 61)

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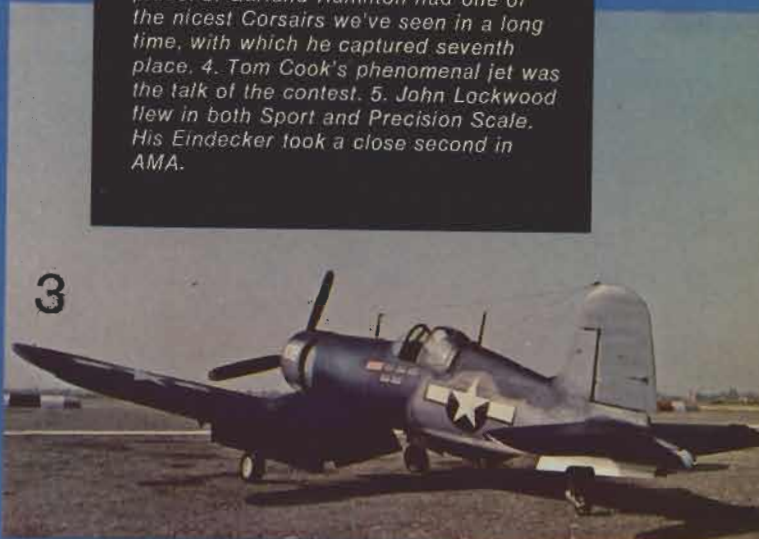


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1. Phil Sibille's Spitfire was very impressive, but mechanical troubles kept him out of the trophy running. 2. Larry Wolfe's Jet Hangar Hobbies Cougar just missed a trophy, and wound up in sixth place. 3. Garland Hamilton had one of the nicest Corsairs we've seen in a long time, with which he captured seventh place. 4. Tom Cook's phenomenal jet was the talk of the contest. 5. John Lockwood flew in both Sport and Precision Scale. His Eindecker took a close second in AMA.



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U.S. Scale Masters



GRAND FINALE

(Continued from page 56)

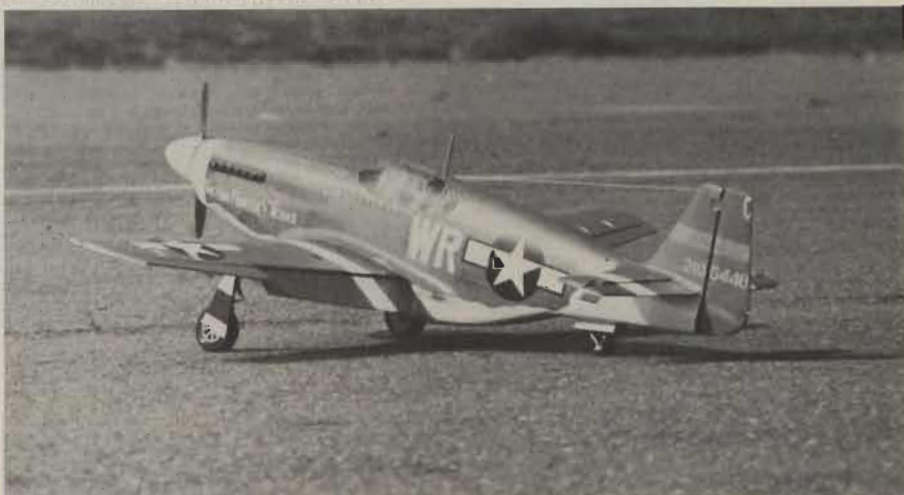
a 91.5. Combined with his very good static score of 94, Violetta garnered a well-deserved second place. The ultimate irony was that, by being able to use Larry's shop to complete the repairs, Bob was able to bump another ducted fan model out of finishing in the top five . . . Larry Wolfe's F-9-F Cougar wound up in sixth place!

As mentioned, it was to be a real contest of flying skills. In that department, there's none with a smoother touch, none with a more proven reliable airframe, than Kent Walters with his SBD-3 Dauntless. With the taste of that Futaba radio in his mouth, he posted the two highest flights of the contest (95.5 and 96.5) to show that he can handle even the toughest competition. He flew like a demon, with an adroit touch seldom seen at contests. His bomb drops were even perfection, as he consistently made those 70-degree diving attacks on the runway . . . and each time the bomb hit within feet of the white line. He exhibited precision when none was called for, and he put a certain something extra into each maneuver, which the judges were quick to detect and reward.

Actually, in the middle of the contest, things were so close that no one wanted to predict who would walk away with hardware. Young Jerry Kitchen was in contention for third place after the fifth round, only to find himself in tenth place once the sixth round was completed. Places were changing hands with each maneuver. Ted White didn't even realize that he had a prayer at getting a trophy, until someone pointed out to him that he was almost tied for first place with only one round to go in the contest. Ted just loves to fly low, and he put on some maneuvers with his M.B.5 that would have set any pilot's teeth



Talk about jet-like performance, Tom Cook's F-4 was a rocket with its twin ducted fans. The model weighed 17 lbs.



Frank Tiano's P-51 was a very controversial model. Some minor disagreement about its low static score.



Ed Izzo came from Massachusetts to compete with his FW-190. Lack of razzle-dazzle gadgetry may have been its downfall. Finished 13th.



The Bobsie Twins: Ted White and Dan Parsons fly together a lot, so that's why they both fly Martin Baker M.B.-5s, which Dan designed.

on edge . . . this man has nerves a little stronger than piano wire. He really earned the fourth place he eventually achieved.

Jim Meister was expecting to do better than third place. He had beat Kent Walters at his own game just a month before at the So. California qualifying event. His SBD-5 was one of the few kits there, being the prototype for the Jemco kit of the Dauntless. It was a magnificent machine, acknowledged by all who saw it as one of the finest Sport Scale kits ever to have been modeled . . . and it justifiably deserved the 96.5 static score it received. But Jim was plagued with engine problems, and the fact that he still didn't have much flight time on the plane was noticeable. Still, his third place honors were nothing to sneeze at.

Perhaps the most significant aircraft at the meet was Tom Cook's

exceptional F4-J Phantom. This huge brute of a jet was six feet long, with a 60" span, and it weighed 17 lbs. The two Turb-ax fan units were powered by modified K&B 7.5 engines. Boy, did that motor scream, as the model did the full complement of flight maneuvers. What a sight to see a model that large flying as if it were a .60-sized machine. The *piece de resistance* was that drogue chute, which deployed immediately after the big jet touched down. If there was a favorite of the crowd, it was the Phantom, and we had numerous people approach us to ask when it would next take wing.

Speaking of crowds, we've never seen the Mile Square facility so packed with onlookers. A conservative estimate was that there were some 3,000 spectators on Saturday, with perhaps double that on Sunday. They were a supportive bunch, and a continuous narrative over the P.A. system kept them all involved and well entertained. We wonder how many of them really appreciated what they were seeing and if they

really understood that never before had two dozen fliers of such exceptional skill been gathered in one place?

But there was no stopping the lanky Arizonan, and Kent's fervent dream of getting a new radio for his big B-17 was realized . . . the guy was smiles from ear to ear. Everyone concurred that he deserved the honor of being the first ever U.S. Scale Masters Champion . . . it couldn't have happened to a more competitive and friendly guy. But everyone knew that, had it not been for the tweak of a needle valve, the adjustment of a clevis, the nudge of a transmitter stick, that it could have been anyone's victory . . . that's how close the whole contest was.

The judging was considered very good by all of the contestants. Admittedly, there was the usual case of having one set of lenient flight judges, while the other line was harder to score. But, in perspective, even this divergence was a mere point or so difference. No one, except Fankie Tiano, had any beefs about

the static scores, which is usually the crucial area for scale contests. One of the objectives of the Masters concept was to get the leaders in scale from around the country together to see how each area of a contest was handled. This was to be a learning experience, and many modelers went home with new ways of doing things. This is a giant step toward unifying scale judging, for unified judging can only grow out of a sense of unified thinking.

Some of the subtle differences were pretty apparent. Ed Izzo, for example, was a little surprised to see models getting consistently better flight scores for mechanical options, while he used his flying expertise to impress the judges with aerial maneuvers. Ed's FW-190, with only flaps and retracts, was probably very competitive back on the East Coast, but the judges were looking for other things at this contest. Also, the emphasis on scale speeds and maneuver placement seems to vary from area to area. Only time will tell if the Kent Walters approach can win in Kentucky next year, but at least we have begun to make significant inroads into getting Scale into a contest format where you can expect the same scores no matter where in this country you compete.

It seems that, in the past, the AMA Nats has suffered unnecessarily at the hands of critics who didn't appreciate the regionalism of scale contests. Differences in interpretation of the rules book on such matters as scale speed can be traced to local emphasis (or lack thereof) on such matters.

Also, the Editor was quick to point out, in his brief remarks at the Satur-



Bob Frey demonstrates the perfect maneuver to execute when the gear fails to come down. No damage.

day banquet, that the concept of a Masters inherently allows a more practical and honest method of selecting an FAI Sport Scale team. He noted that any number of the models at the contest that weekend might, given the opportunity, have been just as competitive in the FAI arena as those which flew in Canada last year (as an interesting aside, not one of the qualifiers who flew in international competition even showed up at the Masters).

By the way, that Saturday night banquet was only surpassed by the

hospitality suite the Squadron had on Friday evening. The song reprinted at the beginning of this article was first unveiled by Al Casey at the Saturday banquet, in the middle of a power failure. Needless to say, the tin eared modelers failed to appreciate the intricate musical complexity of the piece, which was obviously influenced by Bach's Brandenburg Concertos.

In recognition of Harris Lee, who coordinated the entire Masters, the fliers presented he and his wife with a lovely silver serving platter in commemoration of his distinguished service.

The final day of the contest was almost anti-climactic. There were



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Art Johnson drove from Florida to compete, only to have to leave in the middle of the contest, and he then spent three weeks in the hospital.

lots of back-and-forth place changes among the top fliers, yet it was apparent to everyone that no one could even come near to Kent's scores. Even worse, it looked as if a few protests might blot the clean record of the meet. As mentioned, Frank Tiano's static score was the object of some discussion among the contest officials. The judges were reconvened, and the decision was that the score must stand as it was originally recorded. In the opinion of this humble reporter, the whole issue again seemed to be the type of rules in-

terpretations we have found to be more regional than universal. Frank's documentation had some areas of ambiguity, and it was this "gray area" which caused the misunderstanding.

Worse than that was the situation with John Lockwood in AMA Scale. There were only three entrants, which came as a major disappointment to all, since there were more trophies than contestants. One has to wonder if all the hassles and expense of supporting AMA Scale at this and other events is justifiable. The Scale Squadron would be the first to admit that their expertise in AMA Precision Scale is limited, for the very reason that you can't get good at something unless you practice, and you can't practice if

there is no one to practice on. This, essentially, was the causal force which resulted in a very sticky situation.

A little mistake started it all. The score sheets for AMA had only one line designated to show both Landing Perfection and the Spot. The judges had to remember to score these as two separate maneuvers. In the heat of the late Sunday afternoon, the tired judges overlooked the irregularity in the score sheets, and they forgot to record Earl Thompson's last landing with his immaculate Focke Wulf FW-44J. Did he hit the spot or didn't he? Not only was a 32" high trophy at stake, but the winner was to receive a Byron Originals F-16 kit, complete with the ByroJet fan system.

John Lockwood, who had flown the pants off his Eindecker in order to make up the tremendous deficit between his and Earl's static scores (64.5 points difference), was shocked to find that the judges hadn't recorded the landing that would have made the difference between first and second places. The flight judges were reconvened behind closed doors, and the consensus was that they could all accurately agree that Earl had made the landing. John did not file an official protest, although the look of disappointment on his face at missing the big one by so little was obvious. As in any sport, the judges' decision is final, of course. It's too bad that the first Masters had to have this blot on its record, but it's a situation which would have been difficult to avoid.

We can guarantee one thing . . . coming in dead last in a contest of

(Continued on page 76)



CHRISTEN EAGLE 1

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(Continued from page 64)

this magnitude would be an honor!! Most modelers only dream of a match of their peers, with no "dead wood" to slow down the contest. They envision a gathering of competent fliers controlled by the best in judging, with sufficient time to get in enough flights to prove the best man. The Masters Championships was all of that, so to have even flown in it was the fulfillment of a dream.

Next year there will be an expanded format for the Championships program. More regional events will be added, to allow for better representation from the entire country, with travel getting more expensive, the idea of more regionals makes more sense). Look for the ad in this issue which announces the complete schedule of qualifying events. The Chairmanship will be divided between Dale Arvin, who handles all the events East of the Mississippi; and Harris Lee will use the experience he gained from last year's meet to coordinate the West Coast activities. The first fly-off has already occurred, over the New Year's weekend, at the Tangerine meet in Florida. The 1981 Masters schedule becomes even more important when one realizes that this is an FAI Team selection year for both AMA and Sport Scale. It remains to be seen whether the pilots will shift their emphasis from the Nats, which has been the traditional event for selecting the teams.

The first U.S. Scale Masters Championships is now history, and it has left a legacy of success that will set a mark for future meets to equal. The Southern California Scale Squadron put together a superb combination of judging and site capabilities, and the resulting contest showed what a success the planning was.

Perhaps the best way to sum up the feeling of the meet is to quote from one of the many letters of appreciation received from the contestants. The following remarks are excerpted from a letter written by Phil Sibille; "The overall feeling of this contest was that one was watching an airshow of full-size aircraft demonstrating how well they could perform the maneuvers their designers had intended . . . exactly what scale modeling is all about." □

Many modelers have dreamed of reproducing this famous WWII observation plane, which has prompted SVENSON to bring out his latest kit. The model has the STOL and flying characteristics of the original and the kit shows a degree of prefabrication which has hitherto been rarely met in scale-kits: besides the host of prefabricated balsa, and plywood parts, the kit also contains the vacuum-formed cabin panels, the die-cut engine cowling parts, a steerable tail wheel, preformed wing-struts and an undercarriage which is absolutely true to the original with many die-cast parts, telescopic legs, springs, fairings, plus wheels, tank, engine mount, etc.

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