

# THE CORPORATE AIRSHOW

In 1996 Damien Milk, Damien Mould, Giles Hill and I built four 1/3rd scale Sukhoi SU 26 models to compete in scale aerobatic competitions. We thought they were all going to be red but somehow on machine ended up with pink livery. After two years the scale aero scene disappeared sold to Greg O'Keefe. He purchased it as a present for his friend, Jeff Dutton, to hang up in his exotic car showroom. When it was sold I took a great deal of care removing the gear.

In 1998 I received a phone call from Greg to see if I would be interested in gearing the aeroplane up to fly at the Historic Motor Racing event at Sandown. Knowing it wouldn't be a huge job getting it going again I replied in the affirmative. There was no time to get a model display permit so I fitted a banner release and planned to tow an advertising banner as this operation was not deemed by CASA to be a model aircraft display. The day arrived and when I asked Greg how we get inside the circuit he was a bit cagey. I kept asking it was



*Damien Mould, Giles Hill, Damien Milk and Stephen Green's 1/3rd scale Sukhoi SU 26. Wingspan 2.3 metres- weight 12.5 kg power Zenoah 74cc twin cylinder two stroke. Yarra Glen Sept 1996.*

revealed that if we ask and they say no, then we cannot fly." Ah so we weren't invited.

The vacant carpark at the south end of the Grandstand was suitable to fly from and I bluffed my way past security and got to the flag marshal point at the end of the straight. The plan was to fly in the break after the Dutton Rally finished but Greg and his mates started getting cold feet and started deliberating.

I had put in a bit of an effort getting this far and it was just another flight to me so I switched off the phone and started the engine. After taking

off then orbiting to keep out of sight out I walked over to the track to wait for the end of the race then flew the Sukhoi into the middle then tracked along the main straight about fifty metres out. After two laps I dropped the banner about 750 metres downwind, hit the smoke



*My card.*

switch and three it about for three minutes. I then landed and quickly packed up ready to piss off.

As luck would have it there had been a big crash during the Dutton Race and things were at a standstill. The commentator had just run out of things to say and he saw the plane and said "and here comes the Dutton plane with the banner" After a three minute routine the crowd clapped and cheered and it was a hit.

We asked the Phillip Island Motor Racing Circuit if they would be interested in us flying and after telling them we flew the Historics at Sandown we were in. Operating off the dirt in



*North end of Gardner Straight at Phillip Island for the 1999 Qantas Australian 500 cc Motor Cycle Grand Prix. Thousands of spectators changed race controls mind about flying under the bridge.*

the trailer car park in the middle of the circuit was really tight with a side slip required to get in and the landing roll sometimes ended with a 180 hand brake turn to pull up. With trees all around the minimum altitude for aerobatics was 100 feet to stay visual. The only instructions from the race organisers were to adhere strictly to the flight times to keep clear of the full sized displays. Greg got the time wrong and at 1.25pm I took off.

I started with a vertical switched on the smoke and started boring a huge hole in the sky when I heard a familiar noise so the smoke was switched off and headed for the deck flat out. As it pulled out the Roulettes appeared from the west and for a few seconds it appeared the Sukhoi was in formation. The next few flights were without incident and when packing up at the end of the day a chap roared over on a four wheeler and asked if we

were the people flying the plane. After we both took a gulp and replied in the affirmative he handed Greg a card and introduced himself the circuit manager. "Anytime you want to fly here let me know" and rode off.

That was the start of the Corporate Airshow and during the next four years we flew at major motor sport events at Phillip Island, Sandown, Calder and Winton race tracks. Once the organisers realised we could be relied upon we were able to operate with minimal supervision



*Told them I was the Stunt Pilot.*



*Sukhoi, Spitfire and Bellanca Decathlon at the 2001 Grand Prix.*

at most events. Flight times varied from one to five minutes and once it ran out of fuel when they asked us to keep going while a stacked car was cleared off the track.

I only cancelled one flight due to weather which was at the 2001 500cc Grand Prix. I could have flown but there was only one idiot in the grandstand at Siberia, huddled under a brolly at Siberia so he wouldn't have seen the display anyway. That weekend the ceiling was only two hundred feet so the normal routine had to be modified. Occasionally the model nearly disappeared that day.

The windiest weather was at World Superbikes Phillip Island when the A.S.I. on the

ABC news helicopter was reading 35 knots on the ground. Another time I started to faint just as the model went vertical. I dropped to my knees and recovered then landed immediately. Eating thirty minutes before each flight was added to the checklist. Greg had a few basic flying lessons and if that happened again the plan was for him to aim it for the centre and fly it in.

### **500cc GRAND PRIX**

Flying at the 1999 Qantas World 500cc Motorcycle Grand Prix was a real buzz. It would have been great to have the four Sukhois flying but Damien Milk wasn't current and to his credit he didn't want to fly



*Finally got out of the mud and wind at Phillip Island. Now we could leave the aeroplanes in one piece for three days.*



*This was the easiest way to move the around the track but your legs got tired. The Sukhoi did quite a few miles being towed as I sat on the back of a wagon.*



*Taking off down the main straight. What a great runway but hard on tyres as the crosswind and doughnuts really chewed the rubber. Often the hubs broke.*



*Lukey Heights 1999. Landing up the hill was very tricky. This was the spot where Giles Hill had to avoid the course car. Giles got this location as he does a lot of slope soaring.*



*A helicopter was more suitable at Lukey Heights in 2000. Nick Csafaby from NC Helicopter Services.*



*The SU26 had two 1.5 litre smoke tanks and a twelve volt gear pump pushing diesel into each exhaust stack. The nozzles were 5mm from the piston. When it ran out of smoke the crowd lost interest.*



*Flying from Honda to Southern loop. The smoke hangs around on a cold day and straight out pipes did the trick even at this distance.*



*During a touch and go under the bridge at Siberia the WWI Sopwith Pup rolled a tyre off the rim. The crowd hushed and I flew it in one one wheel and lowered the faulty wheel onto the bitumem and received a tremendous cheer.*



*The crowd hushed when they heard a real jet engine spooling up. Dad's 300 kph Scorpion Jet at Southern Loop in 1999. Six kg of thrust at 120,000 rpm.*

This was very disappointing but he saved me from having to say no. Damien Mould and Giles Hill flew their Sukhois and Ian Bendle stepped in and flew his thirty three percent Extra 300.

To iron out any problems with the system I flew each location on Friday and Saturday. The only problem turned out to be the Stunt Rider who seemed to feel like we were stealing his thunder. On Saturday afternoon I had to lift the antenna up out of the way to avoid getting it knocked out of my hands as the bike flashed past at high speed. At the Stewards meeting I complained and he was sent to other parts of the circuit.

### **Grand Prix Day**

Flying off the 12,000 feet of bitumen at the Avalon Airshow is easy, the hardest thing is avoiding midair collisions with so many models airborne at once. I was a little apprehensive about the guys' reaction when they first saw the flying area even though I would not have asked them if I had any doubts they would quickly come to grips with what is by model standards a tight flying area.

Operating from a top quality section of bitumen on a world class motor racing circuit may also sound easy but each section has very specific air-space limitations with crowds at either end and to the side being an absolute. Aerobatics is the easy part, getting the approach right approach to get back requires real skill because when the radio call comes in get it down you have to land, regardless of any crosswind. One also had to monitor and

avoid moving obstacles that were not supposed to be there. Obstacles such as the press van and flag marshalls sweeping the track.

We all got our eye quickly and when you pulled vertical you could then look around to see what the other planes each section of the track of the track were doing. Quite a few times there were four models climbing straight up, three belching smoke into the bright blue sky. What a sight!

*The Sukhoi has flown under all the bridges at Phillip Island. Southern Loop 1999.*



### DOH!

Over at Siberia the crowd started chanting to Damien Mould to fly under the bridge. Then it escalated to “UNDER THE FUCKING BRIDGE” He received clearance to go for it then lined up for a low inverted beat up, under the bridge. At 160 k.p.h. he discovered the ground start to rise and the fin was going to hit the bitumen when he rotated to climb away. With no way out



*Inverted at full throttle down the north end of Gardner Straight about to go under. Would I ever get to do this again?*

I can still hear Ian Bendle’s prop tips going supersonic and after the second flight I don’t recall him throttling back all that often. On the third flight there was a tremendous roar that each pilot clearly heard. We all knew what that was for but three of us didn’t for whom the crowd voiced their affection.

*Anything with a piston.*



*Ready to go.*

the model ground itself to a halt, right in the centre of the track. Dead level not even a scrape on the wingtips and much to the delight of the crowd. Damien took a bow.

Race control had a fit when the call came in about a crash. Then Giles had to go around after narrowly avoiding the course car which had stopped to watch the landing. When he taxied off the runway

one wheel caught a pothole and the model tipped up on it's nose. From the tower all they could see was the tail sticking up out of the ground and from that distance it looked like it had gone into the crowd.

The models were a real hit with the crowd and the organisers wanted us to keep flying but they were a bit worried. Quick talking assured the Clerk of the Course that everything was under control although technically it was a crash, it wasn't the result of a failure, Damien had simply performed a controlled flight into terrain. The manoeuvre had been executed safely and within the rules.

During the two o'clock flight preceding the 500cc Grand Prix and I experienced the same crowd chant as Damien at Siberia. A minute into the routine thousands of people started and when they added the profanity Race Control changed their mind so I trotted over to the bridge to execute the flight plan I nussed out just in case. Instantly the crowd knew it was on and you could have heard a pin drop.

Not knowing if I would ever be allowed to do this again I made the most of the opportunity and after flying the curve over turn twelve I hit the smoke, rolled it on it's back and flew flat out inverted down the straight a metre up. Under the bridge then pushed up and pulled the power back to reduce the turn radius so as not to bust the thirty metre rule. Past the vertical then gassed it up and ruddered it towards the centre then



*Flat out down Gardner Straight at World Superbikes 2000.*

*You had to keep your eyes open for motorcycles and marshals sweeping the track. The biggest problem at the 1999 Grand Prix was the stunt rider who thought we were stealing his limelight and nearly knocked the transmitter out of my hand.*



*On final with the engine off and the Hawk rolled to a stop right opposite the Tattersalls place in the pits at Sandown Historics. It was the only time in three years our sponsor saw the aeroplanes fly.*

did a lomchevac then landed. The three doughnuts with the smoke on fired them up even more then when I tipped up off the edge of the track they went beserk and I took a bow. The officials politely asked me not to do any more doughnuts because diesel oil on the fastest corner in Australian Motor Sport wasn't a good mix.

In 2000 over at Siberia Ian Bendle's had to go round and on it's run in the Navy Seahawk spotted the model and diverted. They had to wait until he got in and the Navy was really peeved about missing their display.

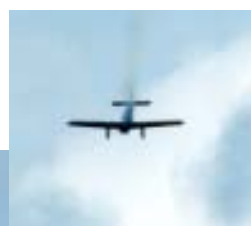
Flying models commercially is very similar to competitive



*The Miles Speed Hawk, so easy to fly, a pilots dream.*



*You could do the best slow rolls but no one cared. That's display flying.*



*70cc and 220 kph it was fast and loud but alas no one knew what it was.*



V8 Supercars  
Calder Park.



Like towing a caravan at Winton V8 Supercars. Up elevator trim was free mixed with the release. When the tow line snagged in the elevator counterweight we decided a dedicated banner tow plane was needed.



Swapping the 23cc mil for a 74cc twin cylinder gave it plenty of power for banner towing.



The first banner was hand made and could be read up to one kilometre away.



The Decathlon could tow a 1.2 by 8 metre banner at half throttle. This plane was a real dog to fly but flown smoothly it looked real It had two good tricks, Blip the ignition repeatedly then landing made people think the engine stopped and it crashed landed. The other was to drop the banner then open the tap and punch it straight up to 1000 feet then flat spin down. It took two turns to stop.

flying and it was very satisfying to be able entertain and demonstrate to the general public that R/C models can be operated reliably, even in atrocious weather conditions. The Zenoah engines gave fantastic service and the JR P.C.M. radio handled the myriad of microwave and VHF transmissions brilliantly. I tried on P.P.M. on the Friday in 2000 and never ever ever did that again.

Although I flew at lots of events the first 500cc Motor Cycle Grand Prix was the highlight. The Australian Grand Prix Corporation really wanted us to fly out of the middle of the paddock. I insisted that unless we could fly off the race track there was no way I would ask the best people capable of both operating safely and put on a good show. I did my best ever torque roll, thirty metres up and it rotated three times around the prop as it drifted along Gardner straight. It was so good I held the transmitter up to the crowd and watched what was a noisy airborne rotating smokin Tattersalls sign. .

Another highlight was flying my Dad's 300 kph jet with his own jet engine. The crowd thought it was a joke until they saw a flame belch out the tailpipe as it spooled up.

One thing we all learned was how you could really feel the collective mood of a crowd.



V8 Supercars at Calder Par 2001. This was a very tight spot to fly a large model.



*Our own runway at Sandown meant we could take off and land whenever there was a gap in the program.*



*With it's large tubby fuselage the Sukhoi was a brilliant display model. The high drag fuselage allowed you could just leave the throttle open, keeping the noise level up and it was realatively easy to remain within the required airspace.*



*The rudder pitch coupling made it a pig landing crosswind. I hated bouncing it but the crowd didn't..*



*At the Sandown Histroics 2000, people pestered us so much to fly this static P40 Warhawk it convinced us to get a warbird.*



*Ballarat Airshow 2001.*



*Greg O'Keefe holds on during startup at Calder Park.*



*Three pointer at Historics Sandown 2001.*

*The 1/5 scale Spitfire was a real crowd pleaser and a few slow rolls and a loop and a flyby were all you needed to do. Often the models would fly up to a kilometre away and the extra power made a Split S the safest way to turn around. All models had straight out exhaust pipes for maximum noise.*



*Photos by Graham Peake.*