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NONFLYING AWARDS

SCORING AT THE U.S. NATIONALS

AN AIRVENTURE ADVENTURE

DESIGNED TO INSPIRE

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID BRESLAUER

The story of the Yak-110 is not only about an amazing airplane, but more importantly it's about meeting and working with some of the most incredibly talented, inspirational, and supportive people I have ever met. I have been very fortunate in my aviation career and have achieved many of my life-long goals, but it is the people I've met along the way who have made the difference. This is a story of passion, persistence, and a love of all things aviation by the people who have had a profound influence in my life.

In 1996, my good friend Mark Leseberg and I acquired a wrecked Pitts S-1S that we spent the next four years rebuilding. In honor of Leo Loudenslager, whose accomplishments were an inspiration to me, the N-number of that Pitts, N17NV, was a tribute to his one (1) world and seven (7) national (N) victories (V). In 2003, I flew the Pitts to Denison, Texas, to fly in the U.S. National Aerobatic Championships and to compete for a spot on the U.S. Advanced Aerobatic Team. I won the Advanced category and was selected captain of the team to represent the United States at the 2004 Advanced World Aerobatic Championships (AWAC) in Sweden.

Flying the Pitts was fun, but I was looking to advance my aerobatic skills. At the time, I was considering moving into a Sukhoi. The Yak-55M was a good aircraft to train in for the transition into the Sukhoi, so I set out to find a Yak to fly at the world championship. Michael Racy had worked closely with the Russian aerobatic team and offered to help me secure one of the team's Yak-55s to fly at AWAC.

Locally, I wanted to rent a Yak-55 and heard that Klein Gilhousen of Bozeman, Montana, had one. I called Klein and described my need for an aircraft to train in since I was planning to fly the Russian Yak in Sweden. At the end of my pitch he said, "I would love for you to fly my Yak-55, but I just sold it to Chad Bartee in Lubbock, Texas."

As fate would have it, Chad and I had met at the U.S. Nationals in 2003. I explained to him my need to fly a Yak-55, and he was quick to invite me to Texas to fly his. After he purchased N41126 from Klein he hired a local hot rod shop to custom paint the Yak blue and white with orange flames. This aircraft would later become the right-side airframe of the Yak-110.

In March of 2004 I sold my Pitts to Steve Falon, an air show pilot from Sioux Falls, South Dakota. I offered to fly the Pitts to South Dakota and stopped at Chad's airport on the way for an introduction to the Yak-55. David Kujawa, the Sport Aerobatics editor at the time, was intrigued about my decision to transition from a Pitts S-1S to a Yak-55 and commissioned an

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF BOERBOON

article about it, which Chad wrote: “From Super Sexy to Coyote Ugly” (Sport Aerobatics, July 2004). Flying both airplanes back to back gave me great insight into their different flying characteristics, and I knew I could do something great with a Yak-55.

Flying Chad’s airplane in Lubbock made me realize I wanted one of my own in Phoenix to get the required training for AWAC. I found N955SF for sale in Atlanta. The airplane was perfect with a custom red, white, and blue paint job and only about 50 hours’ total time since new. This Yak would eventually become the left-side airframe of the Yak-110.

En route from Atlanta to Phoenix I stopped at Chad’s place to show him the new Yak and give him the opportunity to fly it. This was the first meeting of the two Yak-55s that would eventually become the Yak-110. They would not meet again until October 24, 2016; who knew that 12 years later we would be joining these two aircraft!

I spent the next year flying aerobatics and perfecting maneuvers in the Yak-55, always knowing that flying a Sukhoi was my goal. I continued flying Chad’s airplane at contests in the Midwest and my airplane out west to improve my skills in the Yak. However, I was also looking for a new aircraft to fly at the U.S. Nationals in 2005.

By this point, Klein and I had become good friends, and he offered to let me fly his Extra 300L at the 2005 and 2006 U.S. Nationals. This set the stage for my run to the Unlimited Aerobatic Team. I eventually got to fly the Sukhoi 31, but a friend had an unfortunate incident, which totaled the airplane. Thankfully no one was hurt. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise that led to the purchase of the Extra 330SC that I fly to this day.

This was really the launching point to the rest of the story. With the help of my longtime friend and coach Mike Steveson, I won the U.S. National Aerobatic Championship in the Unlimited category in 2010 — a lifelong dream that was the pinnacle of my contest career. I went on to compete at the next three world championships and one European championship flying the Extra 330SC. I also was invited to fly, for the first time, at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh in 2011 — another lifelong goal.

John Klatt hired me in 2012 to join his air show team so I spent the next two years flying formation aerobatics with John and eventually got an incredible opportunity to fly the Screamin’ Sasquatch Jet Waco at all the largest shows in the United States. Jimmy Franklin was an early influence for me, and I would have never imagined that one day I would be flying a Jet Waco similar to the one he introduced to the air show world.

For many years, I flew multiple types of aerobatic aircraft, but I still owned the Yak-55 knowing there would be some way I could repurpose this unique and

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capable machine. In the fall of 2012, the idea of joining two Yak-55s and adding a jet engine went from something I had been thinking about for years to actually discussing the project in an effort to make it happen.

I met Dell Coller in the spring of 2013, and we began talking about interesting aircraft projects. I mentioned my Yak-110 idea, and we immediately started to brainstorm the concept. Dell had a concept drawing of the Yak-110 put together, and it looked amazing. The Yak-55 by itself is a very capable aerobatic aircraft. With its symmetrical configuration and bolt-on wings the Yak lends itself perfectly to combine two of them together. We spent the next three years discussing the concept and knew the two planes we'd join had to be my Yak N955SF and Chad's N41126.

In September 2016, I called Chad to see if he would be interested in partnering with Dell and me on the Yak-110 project. After I explained the concept to him, he said, "I'm still listening!" Later in the day he called back and said, "Let's go for it." It didn't take long to get the project started. Chad had previously sold his Yak-55, but we tracked it down and it happened to be for sale. The stage was set for this one-of-a-kind aircraft to take shape.

On October 24, 2016, Chad, Dell, and I were at Dell's shop in Caldwell, Idaho, as Ben Anderson taxied N41126 to the hangar where the two Yak-55s would meet again. The two airplanes and the three of us had many encounters over the years. In fact, when Chad sold his airplane, Dell was hired to ferry the plane to the new owner. This was long before I met Dell and before he flew his first aerobatic contest in N41126. Dell flew N955SF and I flew N41126 for the last time as single airplanes before it was time to join them together.

After 19 months of intense effort by Dell and his team at Aero Speed, I flew the Yak-110 at its first air show in Mountain Home, Idaho, in June 2018. The Yak-110 weighs less than 5,000 pounds, and with its J-85 jet engine and two M-14s it has more than a one-to-one power-to-weight ratio. It's hard to describe the incredible satisfaction sitting in the left cockpit of this one-of-a-kind aircraft flying in front of a disbelieving crowd. The Yak-110 is the result of many great people coming together with an incredible passion for aviation innovation and is a repurpose of two aerobatic aircraft that will certainly inspire the next generation of aviation enthusiasts. ***IAC***

Left to right: Dell Coller, Chad Bartee, Jeff Boerboon.

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