

# My Adventure of the 2023 Vintage Stunt Championship

March 15-18, 2023

By Dennis S. Nunes



*Dennis Nunes with his Gladiator 35 at VSC 2023*

Well, here's another story about my adventures in attending my very first Vintage Stunt Championship (VSC) in Tucson, AZ from March 15-18, 2023.

I've always heard about the VSC since I returned to this hobby and started competing in 2015. Everything I heard about this event made it sound like a fantastic contest. As a result, it soon became a 'bucket list' item for me. But I never gave this contest much thought though until Tim Just got his hands on the late Phil Granderson's Olympic. Tim wanted to fly this plane at VSC to honor Phil. Phil's workmanship and finish on the Olympic was absolutely drop dead gorgeous!



*Tim Just with the late Phil Granderson's Olympic*

Prior to VSC, the Olympic was residing some 1,200 miles away at the home of Howard Rush in the state of Washington. Tim arranged to have his Business Manager, who *"just happened to need a break from work"* to fly up to Seattle, all expenses paid. Then rent a car, drive to Howard's home, pick up the plane, drive all the way back and deliver the plane to Tim's home in Southern California.

Tim mentioned that he wanted to fly the Olympic at VSC if the plane arrived in time. In the meantime, Tim was getting his glow equipment together and getting ready to do some test flights once the plane was delivered. The Olympic arrived a couple of weeks prior to VSC and Tim convinced me that I should go to VSC. So we worked out a plan. The plan would be for me to drive and stay at Tim's house on Sunday March 12, we would do some practice flying at Whittier Narrows on Monday and Tuesday, then leave for Tucson, AZ early Wednesday morning. We wanted to leave early enough to make the 7 hour drive in time to do some flying at Christopher Columbus Park in the late afternoon.

However, a problem cropped up when Tim had to make a trip to San Diego for work that would take him all day on Monday. So the only day Tim had to practice was Tuesday. I decided to head over to Whittier Narrows on Monday anyway and fly by myself.

To get to Whittier Narrows from Tim's house on a good day takes you about an hour and twenty minutes. To do this you need to take the I-15 freeway, which according to Google Maps was a parking lot and recommended an alternate route. Not being familiar with the highways in Southern California, I chose to listen to Google Maps and take the alternate route that would bypass the portion of I-15 that was a parking lot. This led me through a beautiful scenic route for about 30 miles. Then out of nowhere, I see that the road in front of me is washed out with sand and a small river flowing across it. Goggle Maps did say anything about this. I pulled over and stopped. As I waited for the traffic behind me, some were adventurous and tried to drive through the washed out area. I felt very uncomfortable and decided to turn around and backtrack the 30 miles. Eventually I ended up in the parking lot that is I-15! To cut a long story short, it took me *3 hours and 30 minutes* to make it from Tim's house to Whittier Narrows.

Once I arrived and with my stooge in hand, I was able to put in 6 practice flights in some very unstable, swirling air that went from calm to 5 mph, and every conceivable direction you can think of during the flights. However, this did work out well as I was more concerned about getting a good engine run rather than focus on flying the pattern. The ride back to Tim's house was better. It only took me 2 hours to get back.



*Practicing at Whittier Narrows Late Monday Morning*

The weather forecast for Tuesday was not good. But there appeared to be a small window of opportunity in the morning before the rain came for Tim to get in some practice flights. We

just needed to get to Whittier Narrows early. However, with the morning commuter traffic and I-15, it took us 2½ hours to get to Whittier Narrows.

I believe we got to Whittier Narrows around 10:00 am, it was cloudy, but no rain ---- yet. After a couple of flights it started to sprinkle and soon changed to a light rain. That did not deter Tim as he made several more practice flights in the rain. The Olympic flew really well, but we had some inconsistency with the motor run. Being all wet, we decided to end the flying session and head back to Tim's house, another 2½ hour drive to get to back to Tim's house.



*Tim Practicing in the Rain on Tuesday at Whittier Narrows*

Once we got to Tim's house, we decided to remove the engine, fuel tank, fuel filter, fuel lines and test everything to make sure we were not dealing with any type of leakage. We removed the NVA and scrubbed it out, making sure that everything was clean. Put it all back together and did a test run to make sure the motor ran well – It did!

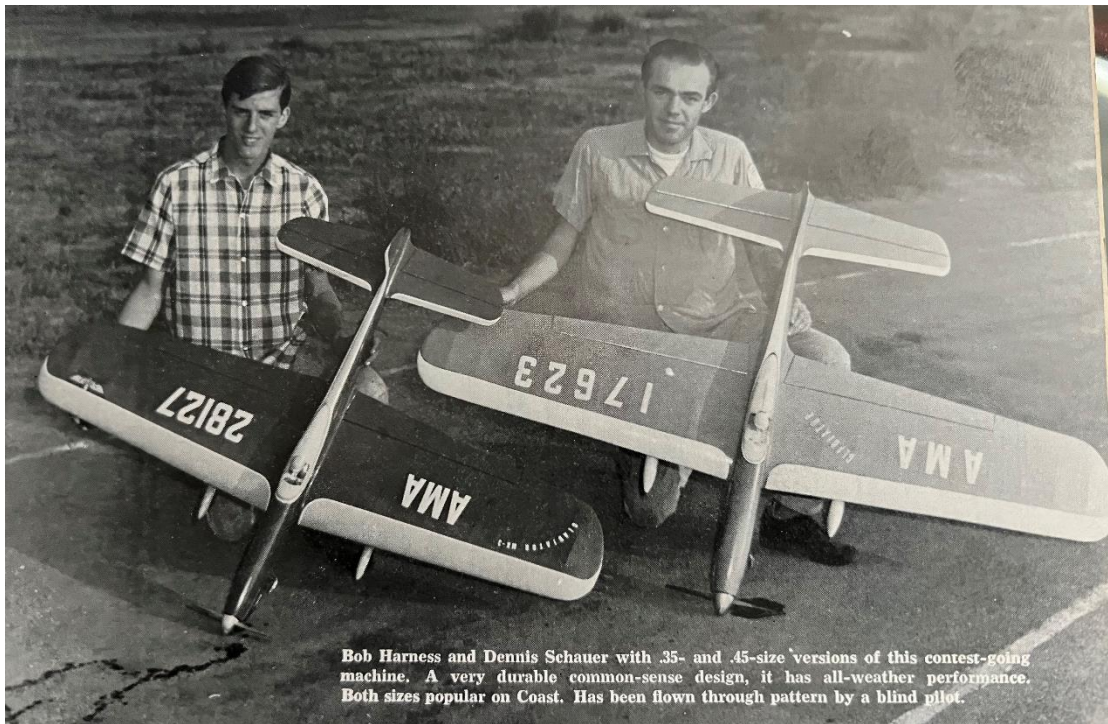
The next day (Wednesday) we got up at 5:00 am and by 6:00 am we had everything packed and were on our way to Tucson, AZ. It was pouring rain when we started as one of those "atmospheric rivers" events began to unleash its misery on southern California. As we were making our way to Arizona the rain had stopped, but the forecast for Tucson wasn't looking very good. We get to the flying field about 3:00 pm under cloudy conditions. However, the wind was very mild at 2-4 mph. It was great flying conditions!

Surprisingly only a few individual were flying and they soon stopped. So Tim and I got our equipment out and put in several practice flights. About halfway through our practice session it started to rain. The next thing you know only Tim and I are flying. Everyone else headed for cover, wisely I might add. We got our planes running and flying to our liking and were drenched. We packed up our equipment and headed to our hotel to dry out.

In looking at the weather forecast for the rest of the week it didn't look good as rain and wind were in the forecast. But on Thursday morning we woke up to cloudy skies, but no rain and no wind! The wind later picked up as the afternoon approached. It was stunt heaven! You

could not have order the weather to be any better. The weather cooperated with us for the entire contest.

An unforgettable moment for me was to see that Bob Harness brought out his Gladiator 45. For those who may not be familiar with the Gladiator story. It was published in the February 1968 issue of American Aircraft Modeler. The Gladiator 35 & 45 was designed by Dennis Schauer. The picture below is from the article showing a much 'younger' Bob with his Gladiator 35 and Dennis Schauer with his Gladiator 45. Bob flew the Gladiator 35 to a 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish as Senior at the 1966 NATs.



*Bob Harness (left) and Dennis Schauer (right) and the Gladiator 35 and 45.*

Bob's wife was enlisted and kind enough to take several photos for both of us before the competition began. For me this was a priceless moment and well worth the trip to Tucson.



Dennis Nunes – Gladiator 35 and Bob Harness – Gladiator 45.

Now for the *Good, Bad and Ugly*.

So Round 1 and Round 2 for Classic was flown on Thursday, with Round 3 and Round 4 on Friday. On Tim's first official flight, the needle setting was on the rich side and the plane was flying at 5.5 second lap times which was slow. Even at that speed the Olympic was flying extremely well. *This was the 'Good'*. But as Tim climbed into the overhead eight and started the first loop, the engine died as it was low on fuel. Basically it did a cutoff loop, which Tim was not prepared for. *That was the 'Bad'*. Tim ran as fast as he could but the lines on the Olympic went slack and the plane drove straight in the ground. *That was the 'Ugly'*.

The Olympic was totally destroyed. My heart went out to Tim because I knew how much the Olympic meant to him. Tim's goal was to bring the Olympic out for all to see, to appreciate Phil's workmanship and see this plane fly one last contest. I would have to say that this was one of the lowest moments of this year's VSC.

I think if I wasn't for me traveling with Tim, he would have packed everything up and head home as he was done flying at this contest. But the trooper that Tim is, he stayed and assisted me for the entire event. Thank you Tim!

For Classic at VSC, on Thursday you put in two flights, Round 1 for my Group was on Circle 1 and Round 2 was on Circle 2 with different judges on each circle. Then on Friday we flew Round 3 on Circle 2 and Round 4 was back on Circle 1. For scoring VSC uses your highest score on Circle 1 and adds your highest score on Circle 2 to determine your placement.

So on Thursday I was the very first one up on Circle 1. There was absolutely no wind at the time. I had to back up quite a bit to stay out of the plane's turbulence. The circles has a pretty smooth asphalt ring for takeoff and landings along with an asphalt center circle for the pilot. Just outside the pilot's circle is gravel. This can be a little disconcerting stepping off the asphalt to gravel and then back again after completing a maneuver. But it worked out fine. I put up a score of 526.5 which put me in the middle of the pack on Circle 1.

By the time Round 2 rolled around, it began with a nice breeze of 2-3 mph. On Circle 2 I was 7<sup>th</sup> up. I was able to put in a decent flight and score of 561.5. So at the end of the day I would really need to score well on Circle 1 in Round 4 to move up in the standings.

On Friday the flying conditions were the same, little to no wind at the beginning of Round 3 and a nice breeze of 2-4 mph for Round 4. For Round 3 I was the last one to fly in our Group on Circle 2. I put in a flight of 553.5 which was very good for me with little to no wind, but not good enough to improve my score for Circle 2 from Thursday. After some excellent coaching advice from Tim, who has a very discerning eye, I was ready. I would need to score and fly well if I was going to have a chance to get into the Top 3.

For Round 4 I was 6<sup>th</sup> up for my final flight. I launched my OS LA 46 in my Gladiator a little richer than I wanted, but the plane flew exceptionally well. I was able to improve my score on Circle 1 from 526.5 to 558.

VINTAGE STUNT CHAMPIONSHIPS #34 MARCH 2023											
CLASSIC - GROUP #1		Thurs Round 1 CIRCLE #1		Thurs Round 2 CIRCLE #2		Friday Round 3 CIRCLE #2		Friday Round 4 CIRCLE #1		total of best score each circle	
CONTESTANT		Order	SCORE	Order	SCORE	Order	SCORE	Order	SCORE	FINAL SCORE	PLACE
Nunes	Dennis	1	526.5	7	561.5	12	553.5	6	558	1119.5	3
Kephart	Antone	2	514.5	8	508.5	11	502.5	5	500	1023.25	14
Hill	John	3	494.5	9	PASS	10	507.5	4	550	1057.5	9
Gingerich	Gary	4	67	10	—	9	466.5	3	438	904.5	18
Harness	Bob	5	521	11	531	8	503.5	2	543.5	1074.5	7
Phantom		6	—	12	—	7	—	1	—	—	—
McMillin	Chris	7	534.5	1	555.5	6	550.5	12	536.5	1092	4
Rhoades	Jim	8	523	2	522	5	498.5	11	528	1050	11
Gilbert	Joe	9	561	3	573	4	576.5	10	572	1148.5	1
McDonald	Bob	10	549	4	573.5	3	574.5	9	555.5	1130.0	2
Akers	Gary	11	487.5	5	446.5	2	454	8	509	963.0	17
Tribble	Dave	12	533	6	497	1	520	7	536	1056.0	10

Scores for Group 1

So my high score on Circle 1 was 558 and for Circle 2 was 561.5. This gave me a total score for VSC of 1119.5 which was good enough for 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Joe Gilbert was 1<sup>st</sup> with a total score of 1148.5, followed by Bob McDonald with a score of 1130.

Saturday evening is the VSC Banquet. For what I could see all had an excellent time and the food was outstanding! It gave everyone an opportunity say our final good-byes and prepare for the ride home the following morning.

I put my first experience at VSC right up there with my experience of attending my first NATs in 2020. It was great to see some of the individuals that you only will see at the NATs. Participants came from all over the country, Michigan, Kansas, Florida, Oklahoma, Utah, Texas, Colorado, Nevada, Arizona and California. I'm sure I'm probably missing a few more states.

Bob Hunt and Jim Vornholt where headed to VSC, but Jim had a medical emergency and they had to reverse course and return home. Hopefully we will see them next year.

So that's my adventure in attend one of the great events in the control line world. If all goes well I hope to attend next year's VSC.

Now for those who may be hesitant about attending VSC — Don't be! You will enjoy the comradery, meet some great people, look at some very beautiful planes, and see some excellent flying. It's like a large family reunion – only better. You won't regret it. Come and join us next year!

Enjoy,

Dennis S. Nunes