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Healthy Bastards Bush Pilot Champs

By Geoff van Asch

James and Thomas, my 8 and 10 year old sons, pleaded for days to be allowed to watch aircraft taking off and landing all day. Having negotiated our leave passes, the three boys (me included) were released from home for the day.

We were off to the second Healthy Bastards Bush Pilot Champs, held at Omaka on 1st February. There was a considerable increase over last year's inaugural competition in the range of flying hardware. Entries increased from 50 something to 67, with pilots and aircraft coming from as far afield as Pukekohe, Invercargill and anywhere in between.

The day dawned without the normal hot dry Marlborough weather; in fact a little SE with not much sun, but that didn't stop some 400 odd spectators enjoying a magic day.

First up was the precision landing comp, ie, landing as close to the line as possible, with both mains firmly down, and not landing short (before the line meant disqualification). The competition is open to anyone – big wheels and excess HP doesn't help here, it's just good old-fashioned airmanship and riding that glide slope (which we were all taught) to the spot on the ground. The aircraft line-up included the usual Cubs and 180s, and also a Tiger Moth, a Minicab, a Stinson 108 (it won last year), and many others. The winner was Richard Coop (RWC) in a Cessna 180 at 0.2, ie 20cm over the line.

Half-time, before the STOL comp started, on a different vector as the wind moved more to the NE, the crowd was entertained by the Cessna 195 of Bruce Brownlee and Bill Reid in the Avro Anson with none other than Dr Dave in the co-pilot seat.

Into the afternoon with the short takeoff and landing



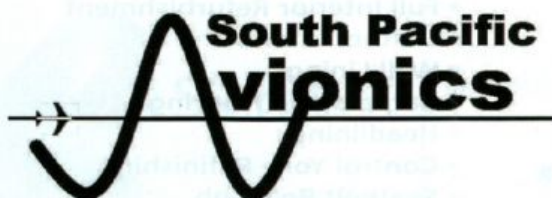
Top: Healthy Bastard Dave Baldwin. Above: precision landing winner Richard Coop in RWC. Left: Nigel Griffith in BOY secures the Light Touring spot in the STOL competition (also see OBC). Photos: Gavin Conroy

competition. There were three classes – Microlight (<1325m), Light Touring (1325-2550m) and Heavy (>2550m) – and we saw a variety of styles with which to yank an aircraft off the ground and place it back to the ground in the shortest possible combined length. Some techniques worked, some didn't, and some were easier than others to watch, but all were entertaining.

First with combined metres were: Microlight – Deane Philip (JUG), Zenith CH 701, 43.4m; Light – Nigel Griffith (BOY) PA18-160, 50.2m; Heavy – John Richards (BKG) C180, 93.2m.

By the end of the day all had performed exceptionally well and no one had rolled their machines into metal balls. Great airmanship for the day.

Omaka, the Valdez of the South? It could be. The competition is growing, so mark your calendar for the third Healthy Bastards Bush Pilot Champs, to be held early Feb 2015. Hopefully I will have completed my Murphy Rebel by then to partake in more of the fun... 🐣



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