

2018 Junior World Free Flight Championships August 4 – 10, 2018, Pazardzik, Bulgaria

Daily reports by Bob Stalick can be read [here in the SCAT Electronic News \(SEN\)](#)

Some final observations, thoughts and suggestions on the 2018 Junior World Champs –

Jim Parker was the Team Manager; however, the title doesn't describe the job he did with this group of young free fliers. Jim was the definition of the word "coach." He got Sevak Malkasyan to be his assistant, which proved to be an excellent resource on the flight line as well as a valued advisor. Jim also kept the team focused and loose. Corny stories, encouragement, organization, supportive suggestions and never a harsh word to the team were a staple. When the need arose to defend against an unexpected slight from the timing crew, he was there. The respect he garnered from the team and all of their supporters was evident from the start. I was impressed that our team jelled quickly and began to work together from the beginning. Even though most of us didn't know each other at the start, we soon acted as though we'd worked together for a long time. I admired his leadership and the teamwork exhibited by all. It's a group. I was proud to be a part of it.

To that end, this team will lose two valued members for 2020. Both Joel and Kyle will age out, since both will be over 18. We will need to replace them, and add to our team. If Adelaide, Hayden, and Roman qualify for Romania, we have room on the team for 6 more fliers or fliers who can compete in 6 events. We should be encouraging our youngsters to participate. Twelve and thirteen year old fliers now will be old enough for 2020 and 2022. Fifteen and sixteen year olds will be ready for 2020. Let's encourage them!

I did a quick review of the participant list and found that 11 of the 16 teams had young women on them, including the USA. Some had more than one. Germany had two sisters. Russia had one of the youngest F1P fliers on the field at age 14, and she flew well. We should not overlook our good fliers who are young women. I have it on good authority that if a youngster is interested, models are available. Contact Charlie Jones at FAI Model Supply or Jim Parker at <N89015@aol.com > for specifics. Also a good amount of the expense of these trips is underwritten by AMA, NFFS and some important donors.

A few thoughts about travel to countries where the alphabet is Cyrillic. Try as I might, I have not cracked the code. Road signs, storefronts and other landmarks are printed in Cyrillic in Bulgaria, as they were in Macedonia. If you think you can get around easily without a GPS system in your car or on a portable device, you are a better person than I am. Be smart, and just get one before your trip or make sure the car you rent has one; otherwise you'll spend a lot of time looking lost--because you will be. Fortunately, some signs are also sub titled in English, and many of the locals do speak a bit of English, so it might be possible to "muddle through," but why take the chance.

To the contest management: I appreciated the large site and the organization of the meet. It was great to be able to read the posted scores within an hour after the end of each round. The recorded announcements were a plus when they were accurate (which was nearly all the time). By and large, the timers were well trained and knew what they were doing. They certainly got the hang of it after the first few rounds were finished. Although wind direction shifts were a huge issue especially on F1A day, the launch line seemed to be too close to the south end of the field nearly all contest long. Drift to the cornfield, sunflowers and the dreaded empty hangar were too common, and many a model was found in that mess. A further move "upwind" would have made it more possible to land on the field instead of in the crops, the cars, or on the hangar. Also, a word about portapots. These units were placed in front of the hangar, which depending on the flight line location, was between 1/4 and 1/2 mile away. Since motorbikes and the like were not available, and the cars were parked quite some distance away, this entailed a long hike there and back--both time and energy consuming. Having some units on a trailer to move along with the flight line would be a big plus. Also, if the units could be serviced and have toilet tissue replaced regularly, that would be a good thing too.

The Hotel Trakia was well situated about 12 miles or so from the field. The rooms were modest and outfitted with generally uncomfortable beds. The food was generous and after a while tasted the same from meal to meal. A trip to a local pizza parlor proved a nice change on Thursday evening. Coffee was typical European with a small espresso serving as the morning jolt. A good cup of Starbucks would have been appreciated. I don't believe the hotel was up to the banquet on Friday evening, as service was slow to start and slow to continue.

The hotel WiFi system was easily overloaded and, as I found out when attempting to send my reports and pictures, unreliable until after midnight and before 6 am, and only then if done in or near the lobby. I actually pirated a password from the Cakebar Cafe next door and got better dependability.

I will give the locals credit. They were a friendly lot. The wait staff was overworked and put in long hours, but seemed ready to help.

Finally, A word about storks. On F1B day, the air seemed to attract storks. One was flying with the models -- just circling with them. Unusual but lovely. If storks think, I wonder what their thoughts were to be flying with such unusual looking birds.

After we (Tom, Roman and I) left Pazardzhik on Saturday morning, we stopped in Sophia for a day before heading home. Sofia is a very attractive city with plenty of downtown park area. In fact, it reminds me of Portland, Oregon. That must mean I'm ready to go home.

Bob Stalick