NEWS RELEASE

Fast Five wow the crowd at Chicago Air and Water Show

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Vertical takeoffs and landings. Tumbling and head-on aerial maneuvers. Diamond and delta formations. Each August, the Chicago Air and Water Show gives 2 million attendees a good show of daredevil aeronautic thrills, in the air and on the water.

Team Aerostars, from left: Paul Hornick, Dave Monroe, Harvey Meek and Gerry Molidor perform in the Yak 52 TW.

The U.S. Navy Blue Angels and the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds alternate headlining the event each year, but our favorite acts involve five of our very own American pilots, most based in — you guessed it — Chicago. They're known as The Fast Five: ORD-based Captains Susan Dacy, Dave Monroe, Jay Rud and John Tredwell and MIA-based Harvey Meek. We caught up with them between loop de loops to find out what makes them tick.

The show's lineup consists of military teams and civilian teams.
Dave and Harvey, who are Boeing 767 and 757 Check Airmen respectively, are members of the Aerostars, a precision aerobatic demo team. During the show, they perform in the Yak 52 TW, a Soviet-designed, Romanian-built, World War II-era aerobatic trainer with graceful aerobatics flown in tight formation and breakaways followed by opposing passes and inverted maneuvers. But the crowd favorite is most likely Dave's signature move: "Piercing the Heart." The team creates a heart formation in the sky and Dave flies straight through the heart, creating an arrow. It comes as no surprise that he's affectionately called "Cupid."

Flying is in Dave's blood. His dad was a captain for Northwest Airlines, his mom was a flight attendant for Northwest and his wife is a flight attendant for American. His son and daughter are earning their private pilot licenses. After 33-year flying career, Dave finds his inspiration in the pilots of tomorrow. "My motivation behind flying is the up-

and-coming youth in aviation," he says. "I like showing them the sky is the limit for anyone in aviation who also wants to fly in an air and water show. Sure, learning precision and formations takes hard work, but it can be done."

Susan, one of the few women performing airshows in a biplane, has flown more than 60 types of aircraft. Her love for aviation started early when her dad turned his farmland into a mall airport in Harvard, Illinois. For the airshow, the B777 Captain shows off her skills in the Super Stearman Model 70, a World War II era biplane used for military training and an aircraft she restored while growing up. "Ten thousand were produced during World War II, but some of the Stearmen were used as crop dusters, and those were the ones I loved rebuilding and resealing," she says.

Scheduled to perform, from top: Captains Susan Dacy, John Tredwell and Jay Rud

Susan calls her aircraft "Big Red" due to its fire-engine-red custom paint job. She practices maneuvers and routines several times a week to prepare for the show, including her signature move that challenges the laws of gravity: performing loops in the sky immediately after a vertical takeoff. After 250 shows, it never gets old.

John, a B787 Check Airman, admits it is a bit different and a little strange to go from carrying passengers in the B787 to flying it empty over a crowd of people spanning the Chicago lakefront from North Avenue to Navy Pier. "If I could give myself a character name in the air and water show, it would be The Dreamer," he says. "It's always been a dream of mine to fly in this show, and I train pilots on the Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner, so the name is fitting."

Both John and Jay, who is also a Check Airman, performed a flyover of the 787-9, taking off from Chicago O'Hare Airport. "I take a lot of pride, being a Chicagoan and flying in one of the city's biggest events during summer," says Jay, who started flying at the age of 14. As a pilot with American, he flew B767s for 30 years.

Undoubtedly, lots of goals are accomplished by aviators performing in the show, with all of Chicago as a backdrop. The stealth, speed, agility and situational awareness required by shows of this caliber mean that the only best of the best will be out there, and we're proud to call five of them — the Fast Five, that is — our own.




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