



PILOT PROFILE Jerry Esquenazi

Q. How did you get started in aerobatics?

A. I guess I got interested in aerobatics with my radio-controlled model airplanes and attending airshows as a teenager. I got my Private Pilot Certificate at age 17. Later, while at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona, I got checked out and rented several airplanes at one of several local FBO's. One of the FBO's got a Decathlon and I began an aerobatics course. I got about 20 hours in that airplane before the FBO sold it. The other FBO acquired a Super Decathlon which I enjoyed very much and I flew it about 35 hours before I graduated. It was during this time I learned about aerobatic competition, but unfortunately, I had moved on after graduation and did not get an opportunity to compete then. Interestingly, I recently reconnected with my original aerobatics instructor who happens to be a pilot at my airline!



Q. What practice time have you been able to put in leading up to this contest?

A. Not as much as I want or need! It's only been about a flight or two per week. We've had lousy weather and I've been busy being my son's flight instructor. He passed his check ride last week so I can now dedicate some more time to aerobatics. I had four flights in the Extra this week.

Q. Do you have a coach or coaches (formal or informal)?

A. Last month I trained with a professional coach for the first time Mr. Sergei Boriak. Wow! That was extremely helpful. In the past I have informally trained with Ron Schreck, Marty Flournoy, Tony Zorn, and the late Mark Fullerton. Ron and Mark were my mentors.

Q. Do you own or rent an airplane?

A. I own my airplane, a 1992 Extra 300S. I purchased it only recently in October 2020 from Jack Knutson. From Nov 2016 - April 2019 I competed with my RV-8, N84JE. I got an opportunity to compete in Shaun Brautigam's Extra 330LX in Oct 2019 and I was hooked!



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Although the RV is designed for aerobatics, I was very hard on that airplane and it was showing significant wear and tear. It's a great Primary and Sportsman airplane and it is Intermediate capable too. I decided to stop competing in that airplane in order to prevent tearing it up. I hope to pass it on to my son someday.

Q. What "big picture" goals do you have in aerobatics?

A. You know, I don't have any real big picture goals except to have fun. I enjoy the flying, traveling to different contests across the country, and the people. My more immediate goal is just to get good enough to place at Nationals sometime. I've only flown two contests at the Intermediate level so I have a long way to go. But for me, it's more about the journey than the destination.

Q. Did you have a particular mentor that helped you get started in aerobatics?

A. Ron Schreck gave me that initial push I needed while huddled around a fire pit at Oshkosh 2016. I had been flying my RV-8 for nine years and enjoyed aerobatics on almost every flight. I had been flying aerobatics in various capacities since 1985 when I was first checked out in the Decathlon. He highly encouraged me to join the IAC and compete with the RV. He told me the steps I needed to take and I took them. I listened to everything he had to say. He suggested to watch a contest before my first competition.

The very next contest on the calendar was the 2016 Nationals and a few days later I showed up in Texas with my RV. He introduced me to a lot of people, showed me the ropes, and put me in the hot seat as a Recorder, Assistant Judge, and Boundary Judge.

Later, Mark Fullerton was instrumental in helping me improve my flying of figures and sequences. Since he was relatively close by, I was able to spend a lot of time with him. He really elevated my flying in a short amount of time. I miss him.

Q. What is your favorite maneuver? Or alternate question: which do you like better - freestyles or Unknowns?

A. My favorite figures are the Hammerheads and Humpy Bumps. I like the vertical lines and the quick pivot at the top of each figure. I feel like I'm going to the moon on an up-line and down-lines give me quite a rush.

I was initially apprehensive about Unknowns. I had watched so many people botch them up and I didn't know how I would handle them. While I've only had two opportunities to fly Unknowns



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in competition, I realized I was better at it than I thought I would be and now I'm looking forward to flying them.

Q. Did you have any part in building it, restoring it or upgrading any of your planes? If so, what?

A. I built the RV-8 from a kit. I began in 1997 and it took me almost 10 years to build. I built it from the ground up with aerobatics in mind. I installed the largest recommended engine, a 200 hp IO-360A1A with fuel injection, a Hartzell constant speed propeller, Christen inverted oil system, and a flop tube in the left wing fuel tank.

Q. Did you buy your plane from another aerobatic competitor, past or present?

A. My current airplane is a 1992 Extra 300S which I purchased from Jack Knutson in Oct 2020. It is S/N 001 and was Walter Extra's personal airplane for a couple of years. Jack flew air shows in this airplane for 24 years!

Q. Do you have any tips or tricks for newcomers that you wish someone would have told you?

A. Talk with and learn from as many people as you can. Get involved in as many aspects of competition as possible. Become a judge. Practice a lot. Have a small core group of friends that can provide ground coaching on a regular basis.

Q. Do you plan on attending any other contests this year?

A. Yes, I will, but where and when are TBD. I will be attending and working at our chapter's contest in Rome GA for sure. I also plan to make the Florida contests: Snowbird Classic and Sebring. In the past I've gone to the NE Region and Texas. I would like to revisit those.

Q. Are you planning on going to the Nationals?

A. I will likely go for several days to volunteer and meet up with some friends.

Q. Do you have someone (a rival) at the contest that you are trying to beat?

A. My rivals are really in my own head. My rivals don't know they are my rivals. Of course, due to my limited competition in 2019 and none in 2020, my rivals will likely change this year. Time to make new rivals!