

You have decided to participate, or at least observe, an AMA/NFFS indoor Free Flight contest, having caught the bug through Science Olympiad or TSA. You have prepared and packed your stuff, planned the drive, and are ready to enter a whole new world. But, what should you expect? How should you act?

is permitted in the facility. If the club is selling concessions, you will want to support the club.

AT THE EVENT

Most indoor events are pretty laid back, friendly atmospheres. Go on in, enjoy yourself! As you enter, head to the registration/check in desk and sign in. Walk around the edge of the room rather than across the middle. Introduce yourself to the CD, since you already got to know him a bit. If you are just visiting, still check in and let them know who you are, and that you have flown in scholastic competitions. In order to fly, you must be an AMA member, for insurance and competition reasons. A youth membership is only \$15/year, and you can sign up on the spot. While many contests have an entry fee to help with facility rental, often there is a reduced or zero fee for youth.

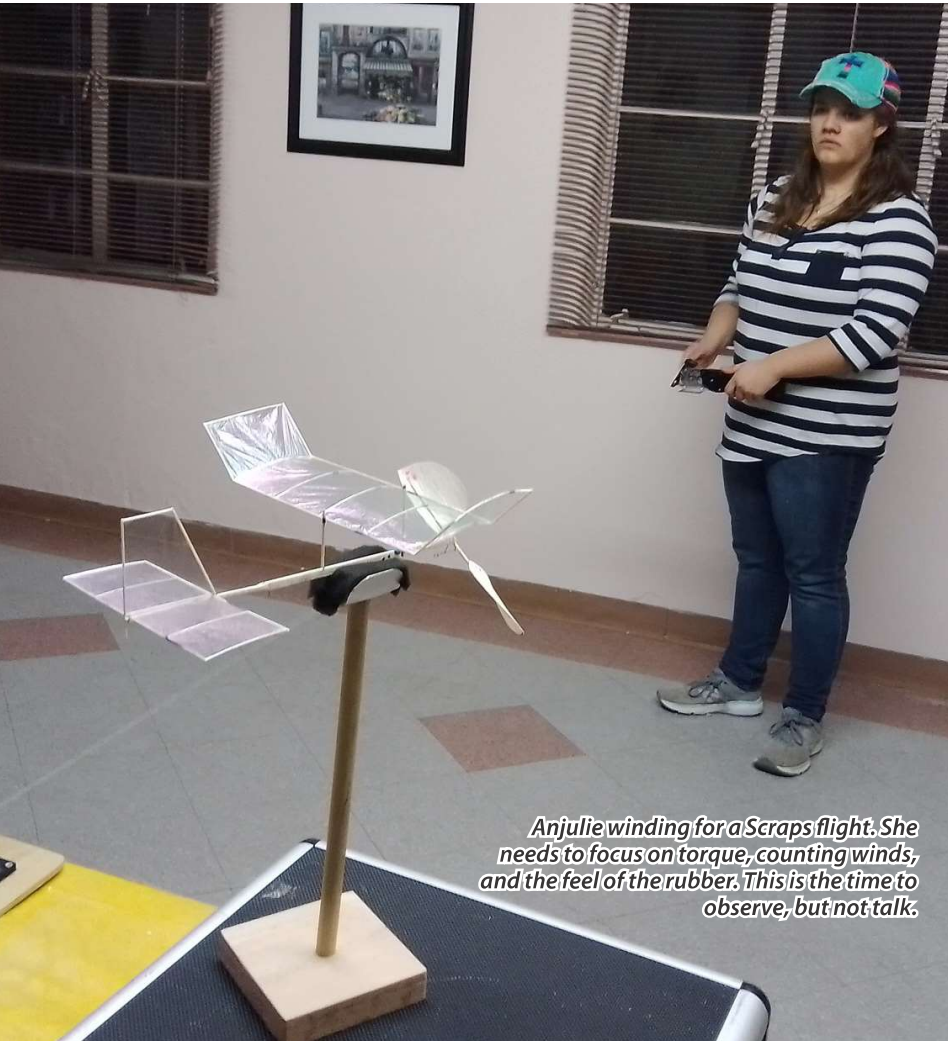
The first thing you will see is that there is flying all the time. There is not a prescribed time slot for your flight, and you are not “on the clock” to prepare your plane. There is plenty of time to “get it right”, testing and adjusting. Not only that, you can receive advice while testing and/or flying! Select a table, if provided, or set yours up, with enough room to wind and operate. Introduce yourself to those around you. You will find they are friendly and willing to help.

Some events will assign certain time periods for various weight airplanes. For example, perhaps the morning is dedicated to gliders, then the heavyweights start at lunchtime, with the lightest planes in the late afternoon. Other events are wide open. Understand what time periods your plane will be flying. Some events will also have a few announced “mass launches”, where a single class of planes are all flown at once, and an all-up, last down format.

In duration flying, most contests are open to any competitive class, whether pure duration or scale. Most contests will even make way for you to fly your Science Olympiad airplanes, and if several show up, allow you to compete and record times. As a newcomer, you may also be showing up with a Limited Penny Plane, a Scraps, or a P-18. If you don't see a scoresheet for your plane, ask!

Most events are contestant timed. Get to know someone around you, or have a parent or friend time your official flights. If nobody is available, ask at the scorer's table, they will find someone to help you out. If you are flying in a class in which a Youth Record may be set, such as F1M, be sure your timer is an AMA member, just in case.

Most events you will fly up to six times in a class. You must announce your flight as “official” before launch, which



Anjolie winding for a Scraps flight. She needs to focus on torque, counting winds, and the feel of the rubber. This is the time to observe, but not talk.

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHUCK ANDRASKA

PRE-EVENT

Most contests put out flyers, with contact information for the “CD”, or Contest Director. Make contact with the CD. Introduce yourself, and ask about logistics. Will tables be available, or do you need your own? If you don't see specific youth information on the flyer, ask if there is a reduced fee for youth (sometimes they have not thought about it, and will make policy after you ask). Ask about parking and where to enter the facility. How far will you have to walk with your equipment, and whether a rolling cart will help (some facilities are old and only have stairs). Ask about your specific event classes, or if they will support flying Science Olympiad or TSA planes. Ask about any meal sales, or nearby meal opportunities. Likely you will want to bring a cooler with drinks and lunch, but ask to be sure that food

you have already done by asking for a time. Time starts with release of the plane, and stops at touch-down. Steering, using a pole or a balloon, is allowed in most classes, but is a whole new skill to learn. Most entry level classes will not require steering. If you do steer, any prop stoppage time must also be recorded.

Watch other flights, not only in your class, but all types of flights. If something catches your interest, ask about it! The neat thing about indoor is the wide variety of planes flying.

EVENT ETIQUETTE

As with any new experience, it is important to know how to act in order to be an asset to the event. A few guidelines will help:

- Many planes are much lighter than you are used to from scholastic competition, and are easily disturbed by walking. Always be aware of planes in the air, as well as planes on stands and tables. Do not walk across the flying area unless absolutely necessary. Even then, walk slowly so as not to stir up the air. Never run.
- You WILL have a time when on the flying floor that a plane heads your way. Don't move suddenly to get out of the way, this will just suck the plane toward you. Instead, slowly move just enough to allow the plane to pass. The earlier you begin to move, the less you will disturb the air.
- Never talk to someone while they are winding. This is a period of intense concentration, counting, feeling the rubber, etc.
- But, do talk to others! They really are friendly! If they are working on something (but not winding), ask if this is a good time to talk. Ask to learn. Ask for help. If you need a part, advice, or anything else, ASK!
- Note what planes are in the air, and winding, before you start to wind. Are they compatible with your plane? If not, is the facility large enough for the planes to fly in different

areas? If an FID is flying or preparing, hold off on your LPP or SO.

- Timed flights have right-of-way. If someone is flying an official flight and you are launching a test flight, hold off until they are done, unless the facility is large enough to separate the flights.
 - Offer your help to those around you. What can you offer? Timing! This gets you up close during the whole flying process, and affords you an opportunity to learn.
 - Avoid opening doors when planes are flying, especially in smaller facilities.
 - When watching your airplane overhead, do not also walk; stay still. It is possible to have an airplane land in front of you and step on it.
 - At a high ceiling site, if you do not have your own steering/retrieval pole or steering/retrieval balloon and you should get stuck in the ceiling, it is acceptable to ask a fellow competitor to borrow their pole or balloon if they are not using it or about to use it. Be aware that they may have spent quite a bit on this equipment and you should be sure you know how to use it to protect the equipment before attempting. If unsure, ask if the owner can help you and teach you how to use it.
 - It is nice for competitors that borrow balloons to contribute to the "helium fund" as your fellow competitors with balloons may have chipped in to this fund to the tune of \$40 or \$50 per person using a balloon.
- Most contestants are very excited to see youth participating, even if just watching and asking questions. If you show an interest and some courtesy, they will bend over backwards to ensure that you enjoy your visit. They want you to come back and fly! Most also have an abundance of tools and parts, so if you forgot something, you can always find help to continue your day. Most importantly, enjoy your day! ✨

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