

ZWARTKOP AIR SHOW 21 MAY 2011

The SAAF Museum at Zwartkop treated the country to yet another maximum effort show on 21 May 2011. Another jam-packed day that did not allow time for a lunch break or a pit stop for fear of missing any of the action.



General Carlo Gagiano opened the proceedings with the usual Cavalcade as a backdrop. This comprised a formation of helicopters from the Museum's collection as well as the types currently being used operationally by



the SAAF. This was followed by a mass radial flypast of Harvards led by a Dakota flown by Flip Vermeulen.

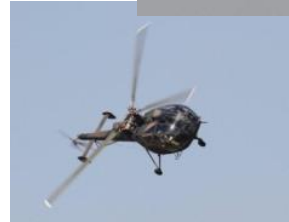


Lt Col Glen Warden in the Museum's Siyandiza Harvard, then separated from the rest and gave a solo display. The Museum's Alo II (flown by Brig Gen Piet Burger) was followed by a display by Brig Genl Sakkie van Zyl in the Alo III. The Puma followed, flown by Brig Gen John Church, Lt Col Rassie

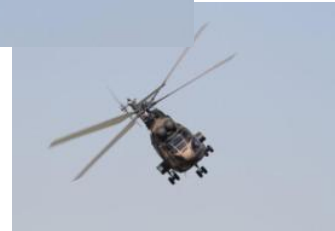


Erasmus and WO Toitjie du Toit.

Both the Augusta 109 and the Oryx gave displays later in the afternoon with the light too poor to show off their dark camouflage colour, but both had active roles in the mini war.



Some civilian aircraft showed off for the crowd, but it was very much a SAAF affair. The Extra 300 Zoom Zoom flown by Brad Bennets always looks impressive. The SU-29 showed



The Museum's Bosbok (Pilot Maj Col Steve Odendaal) each gave too high and too far away to be able



off it can do the same, with Warrem Haslam showing it off in the sky.

Gen Des Barker) and Kudu (Lt short displays, but were really to photograph well.



Just before lunch the crowd was treated to the Cheetah D display, flown by Mike Weingartz. It was a difficult time of day for photography due to the light conditions, but I did manage to catch a few good photo opportunities.



Lt Col Geoff Corser followed suit in showing off Hawk 272 in the South African colours and returned late evening when the golden yellow light made it look impressive, glinting in the sun.



Though our Gripens did not arrive due to a technical problem, and the Mirage IIICZ due to it being serviced, the Aerosud F1 AZ gave two displays, the first at midday, flown by Lt Col Leon Bath. It displayed again late afternoon, with the sun so low that the F1 only showed up in the air when caught by the sunlight. Again it changed the colours to make for amazing photographs.



At about lunchtime Menno Parsons proudly showed off his P-51D "Mustang Sally" doing flypasts to show off his beautiful toy. The old warbird literally stopped everybody in the crowd dead in their



tracks, to just stand and watch. What a sight it would be if a Spitfire could fly with it!!



Two real old timers appeared although only one displayed to the crowd. Jeff Earle shifted the beautiful old Tiger Moth across the sky whilst I managed to photograph a Piper Cub in American markings as it departed mid afternoon.





All the Harvards gave displays during the event. The Tora Tora sequence led to a lot of droning sounds as the Harvard pilots “attacked” a target in front of the crowd. It is very difficult to photograph such an event as they keep a safe distance from each other, but I did try to get some groups on one photograph.



Normally we do not see the SAA Harvards giving displays so I was greatly surprised to see these two white Harvards above us. It is seldom that one can photograph them.

Another favourite must be the Vampire T-55, flown by Col Rama Iyer. For many, the gracious slow fly-by still brings back memories. Again the rich late afternoon sun gave it a yellow glint. For those not in the know, Rama is an ex-Indian Air Force pilot who made South Africa his home, joined the SAAF and is the Director Basic Flying Training (DBFT) at SAAF HQ. The Museum resorts within the BFT Directorate. He flew Vampires, Hunters and Mig 21’s in India.



Two Pitt Special teams performed. The Gabriel team with Scully and Ellis Levine, Arnie Meneghelli and Stewart Lithgow. Later on in the day the Good Year Pitt Specials were literally thrown about the sky, with Glen Warden leading Neill Trollip and Denis Spence.



The Silver Falcons were present as usual, now with their 71st team, and Roy Sproul as their team leader. It is also the first team with a female pilot, Heybrech van Niekerk, and a newcomer Beau Skarda who’s family flew out from Australia to come and see his first military air show display.



Probably the highlight for all the youngsters was the mini war, orchestrated by Lt Col Dixon (AAD Mini War Coordinator) that lasted about 30 minutes. The war game was to save a downed pilot



who fell between a Ratel, Rooikat and Olifant contingent on the one side and a T-72 Russian Tank on the other side. Various parabats were dropped, supplied and retrieved via our Oryx and Puma choppers. All the time the AFV's, with the help of two Rooivalk helicopters pounded the poor T-72 to dust. This made for spectacular photography. Although I was behind the friendly's advance, it still looked impressive. The noise, dust and smoke that must have parched the troop's throats, a situation familiar to many of our veterans.

Lt Col Willie Nel, the Museum OC and Lt Col Clive Shephard, the Museum Ops Officer with the merry band of museum members must be congratulated on another excellent show. They are battling for money but still succeeded in providing the public with a wonderful day out. We should also say thanks to every member at the Zwartkop's Museum. Without all these cogs in the wheel, the show would not have been such a success. Special mention of thanks must be made to F Sgt Johan Combrink and AO1 Pierre du Toit. From the headquarters we have to say thanks to Lt Col Francois Hanekom and his team i.e. , Kevin Woolacott, his ramp controller and Lt Loné Nel as Show Coordinator. Also from our media side, we must say a special thanks to Maj Ronel Prinsloo and Lt Martin Matsete, who looked after our every whim. Congratulations and thanks to all of you guys.

STEFAN BOUWER