

2026 National Aerobatic Championship Report

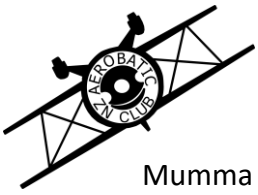
The New Zealand Aerobatic Club enjoyed another exciting, successful and safe championship. Competitors, judges and volunteers placed the box markers out very early and those that made it to Masterton early were treated to some excellent practice weather on Monday and Tuesday. The vibe of the event was great – anticipation was building.

We were lucky to enjoy fantastic weather throughout the week which allowed us to power through all sequences ahead of schedule and almost finished flights by Saturday afternoon with only Saturday morning being un-flyable weather.

Outside of the flying competition, another enjoyable element of the Nationals Event is the social atmosphere that is created by the evenings enjoyed by attendees. We were delighted by Lone Star and Tripoli Bistro on Monday and Tuesday night; Tripoli scoring 10 points for their pork belly! Iain McPhail and Gill Phillips organised a tantalising BBQ for the welcome night of the event. Thursday evening, the AGM was held and all of the committee was re-elected. Hell's Pizza delivered dinner and then we ripped into designing the Free Unknowns sequences for Intermediate, Advanced and Unlimited.

Friday; we flew the UNKNOWNs and the FREE UNKNOWNs then finished off with a BBQ superbly cooked by Chris Schadler and Murray Rogers. Saturday dawned with drizzle that cleared and was a great afternoon to finish off the remaining guys who had aircraft defects, illness or workload back home. Massive kudos to Will Siakifilio for flying to Masterton twice for the event. Grant Benns ran a LLDA ground course on Saturday morning during the drizzle.

On Sunday morning; Brent Griffin recovered enough to fly his Free Unknown on Sunday and eventually win the Advanced category.



Mumma Darla's again provided delicious lunches for us at the clubrooms throughout the week, and the Wairarapa Aero Club bar was open most nights where the excuses began to roll over the beers each evening.

Prizegiving dinner was in Legend Aviation's Hangar and well catered by Mumma Darla's too. What a great location and ambience, thanks for organising this Gill.

The procedures functioned well throughout the week and a couple of notable events included an incursion into the aerobatic box during Morris Tull's Unlimited sequence and Anton Rutkowski needed a couple of technical breaks.

Pierre Pechon was getting lots of practice and flying well in the ZLIN, Mike Fowler brought his non aerobatic Senneca again and was awesome as Assistant CD, Russell Bell dazzled us with the awesome flying in Unlimited category while Morris Tull was trying hard to keep up in his first competition in Unlimited.

John Ashman has made great progress with a lot of encouragement since buying his own DR107 and stepped up to Advanced with Brent Griffin. Both flew well, challenging themselves.

Chris Schadler had worked hard to get his DR107 finished and to the nationals and compete in Intermediate with Grant Bennis and Pierre Pechon. Sad to see the last time the Zlin 50 will fly competition as it is being retired soon due maximum airframe hours.

Sports category was the biggest group. Anton Rutkowski flew his first nationals in his self-built RV3 and despite some fuel flow issues and an inflight defect, he posted some very good scores in both the Recreational and Sports categories. Brad Pearpoint also flew his first nationals in his Pitts, the only Pitts at this event, and did very well. Steve Geard was showing his aerobatic experience despite lack of time in the RV6. Will Siakafilio was busy on the farm in Canterbury and scored well despite having to fly home during the event. Iain McPhail was mostly flying very well but had a couple of days of a head cold, strong winds and cloud that added extra challenge. Murry Roger's CT4B had technical problems so was missing from the list.

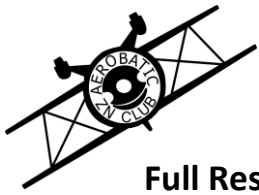
Dominic Griffin flew his first competition in Trish's RV6 and took home the Recreational trophy.

Sophie Fitchett flew the Alpha very nicely to take home the Primary trophy; we look forward to seeing Sophie excel in higher categories in the future.

The volunteer spirit and workload sharing were strong, the box markers were put out and collected by a big team, volunteers Nick Howard, Panav Kalra (PK), and the important barman were much appreciated.

It was exciting to see so many new competitors join the event and thank you to everyone, we look forward to see you at our next event 3 – 7 March 2027

Morris Tull; Contest Director and 2026 President.



Full Results - National Aerobatic Championships 2026 – Hood Aerodrome

Organizing Club: NZ Aerobatic Club. Contest Director Morris Tull and Mike Fowler

Event Organiser: Morris Tull.

Chief Judge: Grant Bennis

Volunteers; Martyn Gosling, Gill Phillips, Trish Stevens, Murray Rogers, Panav Kalra (PK), Nick Howard

Contest date: 11th Mar – 15th March 2026

Unlimited – Power

<i>Pilot</i>	<i>A/c type</i>	<i>Reg</i>	<i>Known</i>	<i>Free Known</i>	<i>UnKnown</i>	<i>Unknown II</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Russell Bell	Giles G-200	ZK-LGT	3413	3810	3017	3443	13684	78.2 %
Morris Tull	MXS	ZK-MXS	3276	2674	1585	2142	9678	55.3%

Advanced – Power

<i>Pilot</i>	<i>A/c type</i>	<i>Reg</i>	<i>Known</i>	<i>Free Known</i>	<i>U/Known</i>	<i>Unknown II</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Brent Griffin	G202	ZK-NUT	2241	1958	1701	1774	7675	62.8
John Ashman	DR107	ZK-XSG	2342	2180	1059	1346	6929	5

Intermediate – Power

<i>Pilot</i>	<i>A/c type</i>	<i>Reg</i>	<i>Known</i>	<i>Free Known</i>	<i>U/Known</i>	<i>Unknown II</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Grant Bennis	G202	ZK-NUT	1688	1779	1459	1817	6745	83.8
Chris Schadler	DR107	ZK-WAM	1664	1883	1334	1818	6700	83.2
Pierre Pechon	ZLIN 50L	ZK-ZSO	1540	1761	1168	1629	6100	75.8

Sportsman – Power

<i>Pilot</i>	<i>A/c type</i>	<i>Reg</i>	<i>Known</i>	<i>Known/Free</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Steve Geard	RV6	ZK-RVF	1018	1078	3187	84.0
Will Siakafilio	Alpha	ZK-VCA	1043	1020	3091	81.6
Anton Rutkowski	RV3	ZK-XRD	955	1041	3063	80.8
Brad Pearpoint	Pitts S1S	ZK-PEG	1041	1012	2959	78.1
Iain McPhail	Alpha	ZK-VCF	867	905	2409	63.6

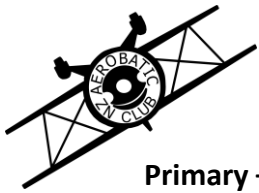
Sportsman Unknown

<i>Pilot</i>	<i>A/c type</i>	<i>Reg</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Steve Geard	RV6	ZK-RVF		84.5%	
Anton Rutkowski	RV3	ZK-XRD		82.7%	
Will Siakafilio	Alpha	ZK-VCA		79.6%	
Brad Pearpoint	Pitts S1S	ZK-PEG		70.3%	
Iain McPhail	Alpha	ZK-VCF		49.4%	

Recreational – Power

<i>Pilot</i>	<i>A/c type</i>	<i>Reg</i>	<i>Known I.</i>	<i>Known II.</i>	<i>Known III</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Dominic Griffen	RV6	ZK-RVF	825	862	857	2545	85.4
Anton Rutkowski	RV3	ZK-XRD	866	843	861	2570	86.3

Winner Dominic due Anton also competing in a higher category.



Primary – Power

Pilot	A/c type	Reg	Known I.	Known II	Known III	Total	%
Sophie Fitchett	2160A	ZK-VCA	615	590	611	1816	80.7

Best Newcomer – Dominic Griffen 85.4%. Anton Rutkowski second 80.8% and Sophie Fitchett 80.7%.

Most Improved – Pierre Pechon for stepping up a category and aircraft and producing solid scores. John Ashman for improvement into the advanced category. Morris Tull for stepping up into Unlimited.

Grey Wings – Iain McPhail for doing stuff without being asked plus efforts with Flying NZ, Grant Bennis/Martyn/ for continuous Mentoring and Leadership.

Dip Stick – Steve for needing to change fuel tank mid aerobatic figure to the aerobatic tank.

Most helpful – Panav Kalra (PK). Notable mentions to Gillian Phillips for dinner planning, Iain for helping out with local tasks and media updates, and Nick Howard for being there every day, and Martyn Gosling for tirelessly judging every flight of the event.

Champion of Champions – Grant Bennis 83.8% for highest percentage across all categories. Chris Schadler 82.2%, Russell Bell 78.2%

North Vs South – NORTH with an average 74.7% / South average 70.3%

Alan Hogan Trophy (Highest Unknown – Intermediate / Advanced / Unlimited)

1st Place: Grant Bennis 81.9%

2nd Place: Russell Bell 78.6%

3rd Place: Chris Schadler 75.0%

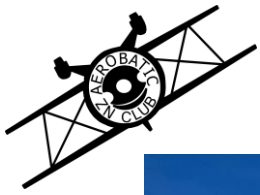
Colin Greatrix Trophy (Highest Intermediate Unknown)

1st Place; Grant Bennis 81.9%

2nd Place: Chris Schadler 75.0%,

3rd Place; Pierre Pechon 65.6%

4minute Free Style – Not flown this year.



Blue skies for a great line up of mostly monoplanes this year.



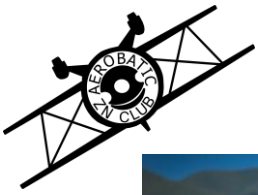
A diverse collection of aerobatic machines.



Pierre Pechon flying his Zlin 50L in its last competition before its retirement.



Russell Bells awesome G200 that he won Unlimited in, well done Russell.



Trish Steven's RV6 was flown by Dominic Griffen and Steve Geard, thanks Trish.



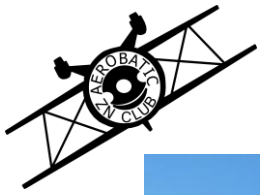
Grant Bennis Looking cool in ZK-NUT



Anton Rutkowski and his cool RV3.



Iain McPhail as starter for Grant Benns flying Brent Griffins G202.



Masterton ATC Squadron visit. It is always good to try inspire the next generation.



Contest Director and Unlimited competitor; Morris Tull and the mighty MXS.



Martyn Gosling, Trish Stevens, Steve Geard, Grant Bennis and John Ashman on the judging line.



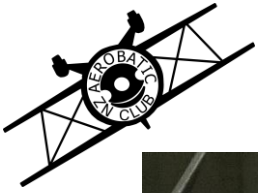
The new Dipstick award.



John Ashmans DR107 under a starry night sky.



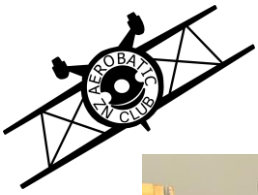
Legends Aviation, venue for the prize giving.



Contest Directors Morris and Mike at Legends Aviation for the prize giving dinner.



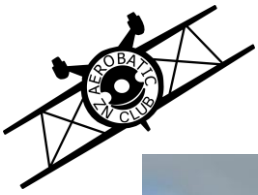
Menacing monoplanes, we just need a Yak 55 to complete the line up.



Winners table, well done guys.



Our 2 best helpers, Gill Phillips and PK, congrats Panav on winning the Presidents trophy.



Dominic and his stash of trophies.



Murry Rogers and Chris Scadler on BBQ duty.