

LDRS-34 Launch Report

First of all, I'd like to congratulate all the NOTRA members who certified at LDRS. Paul Binon and Dan Vento both flew successful Level 3 certification flights. Pat Ralph did his Level 2 and GB Giesey obtained his Level 1 certification.

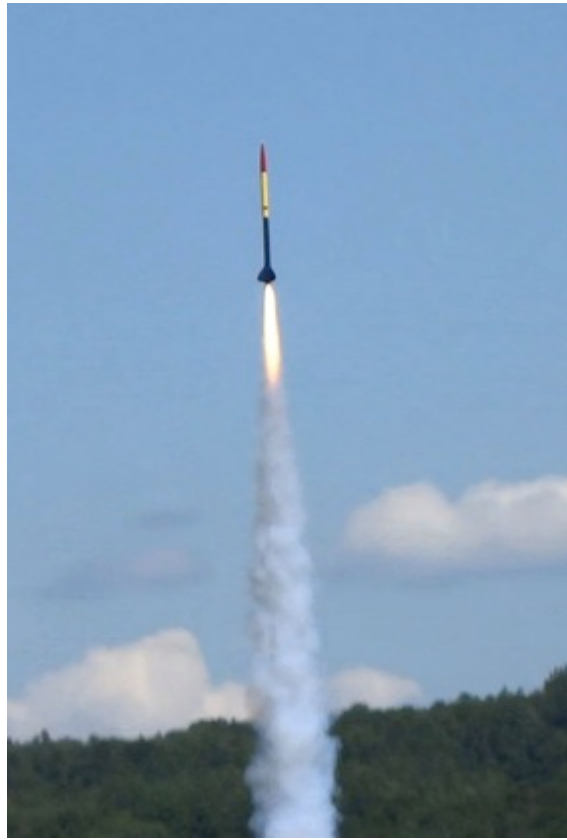
Due to a kitty emergency, I (Chris) was unable to get to the launch site until Friday morning. It was cloudy and raining off and on all day Thursday in Cleveland, so I thought it was probably doing the same thing in Potter. However, Potter had low cloud cover and the ceiling was only 5000 feet, but many people still flew low altitude rockets.

On Thursday, Steve Eves flew his 4" black Mad Dog on a Research K700 Blue to an altitude of 3700 feet. He also flew his LOC K-Load rocket with a 75mm Research K-777. It had rained on Wednesday evening, and water got into the launching system electronics, causing many problems over the course of the launch, like unplanned drag races. This is something we've have come to expect at the Potter launches. Add to that launch pads, rails and rods that were in terrible condition, missing ignition clips, a bizarre and confusing pad numbering system, not enough large rails (I mean, this IS a LDRS!), and the worst range operations that I have ever seen made for a miserable rocket flying experience for many.



Andrew Kleinhenz (top left) poses with his 4" scratch built rocket simply called N3, which flew on an AT J275W to 3484 feet. Recovery was perfect. Don Williams (top center) with his highly modified AT Mirage which he flew on an AT I1299 Warp 9 motor which bulged the motor case and he wound up destroying the lower part of the rocket to remove it. Steve Eves (top right) with his Cosmic Intruder, which he flew on a Research Purple J442.

Friday's weather was much better, with temps in the 70's, high clouds and moderate winds, but range operations weren't. Many people, including myself, waited more than 3 hours to fly one rocket. This seemed to be about average. Knowing of the bad weather approaching and the likelihood that there would be no flying on the weekend, everyone rushed to get their rockets flown on Friday, causing huge jam-ups at the range head because of the glacial pace of range operations, forcing the LCO to beg for patience from the angry crowd. Fortunately the waiver was extended until dusk because of the poor weekend weather forecast allowing flyers to get more rockets up in the air. There was a night launch that evening after dark. Despite all the problems, they managed to get over 600 rockets flown by the end of the day on Friday.



Dave Sears' (top left) flew a scratch built 5" rocket on Research K660 to 2900 feet. He also flew his 4" Darkstar on a Research K800 White. It was a little unstable off the rail and recovered about a mile away. Paul Binon's (top center) BR1501 Level 3 certification flight in progress, which ultimately reached 15780 feet with a CTI M1101 and was recovered perfectly. (Top right) Andrew Kleinhenz's N3 in flight with an AT J275W.



Barry Lynch (left) poses with a HyperLOC-1600 display rocket. Although Barry was at the launch both days, he was not selling LOC merchandise and did not fly any rockets. Several TRA members from Australia were camped out with him under the tent.



Chris Pearson (top left) poses Extreme 3.0 all-fiberglass rocket, which he flew on a 20+ year-old APS 38mm I400 Red motor to 3100 feet. Originally built for Hypertek J hybrid motors, it has flown on hybrids, commercial and Research motors. Mark Coburn (top right) flew his LOC EZ-I on a J275 to 3,000 feet. He then flew it with a CTI J330 Classic motor, which went BANG! A motor cato destroyed the case, which a dealer replaced along with the reload. He then flew it again successfully.



Steve Eves (top) heads out to the away cells with his LOC Mother Load loaded with 3-Research K420 motors. His rocket and the one besides it, both 7.5" diameter look puny compared to the O motor powered Iris sitting next to it. Steve with the Mother Load on the pad (right).





The O motor powered Iris (top left) about 1 second into the burn. It was a spectacular explosion! Steve Eves Mother Load can be seen on the pad to the far right of it. Chris Pearson (top right in the white shirt) waiting for a pad. The wait to fly time was less late in the day. Chris flew his all fiberglass black Hamster Dance #1 on a 29mm CTI I243 to 2500 feet. He also flew the LOC/Precision prototype 5.38" Explorer XL (which he flew at GLRMR) with a 54mm NASSA K2 Fast J480 flight to 2300 feet, which landed in the parking lot directly in front of the Red Arrow hobbies sales area.



Dennis Bova (left) managed to get four rockets off during the launch. The first being the top part of his upcoming Level 3 certification rocket, flown with a 54mm CTI K515 Skidmark motor. Next was an unnamed rocket made of 10" Sonotube (center) flown with a 54mm CTI K1200WT. The third rocket was a converted Warlock with a transition to a 5.38" tube and flown on a 54mm K520W. Lastly, a rocket that Dennis seems to fly at every launch, his V-2+2 flown on a 38mm CTI J357Blue.

Unfortunately because everyone was frantically trying to fly rockets before the sunset, we didn't get pictures of all the NOTRA member's flights. Pat Ralph flew his Sunset Magnum, a Level 2 Dual Deploy Certification flight on a CTI K490 to 4816 feet. He then flew his X-Caliper (an extended 8 fin Dual Deploy Caliper ISP) on a CTI I242 White to 2312 feet. He also flew his PML 4" Amraam Dual Deploy on a CTI I218 White to 1335 feet.

Dan Vento flew his successful Level 3 certification flight, a rocket called the LV3VI with a CTI M1230-IM motor for a flight to 5142 feet. Dan flew 2 other rockets, a Wildman Darkstar Dual Deploy on a Research K350. The other flight was an Aerotech Sumo on an H163.

Late in the day Steve Eves launched his Xtreme Wildman with a Research L911 75mm Purple motor for a picture perfect flight that landed between the right launch pads and the spectator line.

Don Williams also flew his Yank Enterprises 4" Sandhawk with a Loki K250 motor.

NOTRA's newest member, GB Giesey flew his Aerotech Sumo on an AT G80. It finally ignited after 4 attempts. Gotta love those Aerotech igniters! And only after scrutiny from a curmudgeon at the RSO table the likes of which a Supreme Court nominee wouldn't endure, GB flew his LOC/Precision Warlock on a CTI H180 Sparky. Flew perfectly, though not very high, and he got it back all in one piece only 300 feet from the pad to officially earn his Level 1 certification!

Many people, including myself, would have flown more rockets but by 8PM the sun was starting to go down and I felt it was getting too late to try to fly my L and M powered rockets. I didn't want to have to try to locate it in a distant field with no beepers or GPS in the dark if it drifted too far.

On Saturday morning it started raining at about the time flying was supposed to start and continued raining all day Saturday and Sunday, causing launch operations to be cancelled both days. Some people had optimism that the range would open Monday, IF the rain stopped sometime on Sunday. There was limited flying on Monday afternoon for all the die-hard hold outs that stayed. No NOTRA members were in attendance that day, some leaving Friday night, most of the rest leaving Saturday morning and myself (Chris) leaving Sunday morning.



(left) Photo taken out the window of the Ramada Inn host hotel on Saturday afternoon before the banquet looking out over Seneca Lake in Geneva. The temp was 57 degrees F and it rained hard all day.

On Sunday when traveling home it rained all the way to the Ohio border, and reports were that it was still raining Monday morning in NY.

On the plus side, there was plenty of good food and drink including the usual Friday night BBQ on the field, and lots of vendors wanting you to spend your money on rocket stuff. Motor availability was the best I had ever seen at a launch. All of them (except AMW) pulled their big trailers off the field on Friday night as not to

get stuck in the mud when the rains came on Saturday. The PA system was the best they ever had and they transmitted the launch operations on a FM radio channel. Plus, we didn't have to endure the overpowering smell of plowed under onions this year!

There seemed to be a lot of empty parking spaces in the first and second rows, which were supposedly completely booked beforehand. I think that many people, especially those traveling long distance, looked at the weather forecast and cancelled their plans to attend the launch.

LDRS is heading back out west to Lucerne next year.