

African *Serious about flying* **Pilot**™

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**Gabriel Wings
DISPLAY TEAM**



**Beech Baron
FORMATION**

Al Ain Airshow



Three Competitions - Prizes worth R74 000 in total • Airshow Calendar

Cover by Athol Franz



WIN WIN WIN WIN WIN
FLIGHT IN A
PITTS SPECIAL
valued at R 1 500

Gabriel Wings Formation **AEROBATIC TEAM**

Text and photography by Athol Franz

Doyen of the South African airshow scene, Scully Levin and his aerobatic team are now flying as the Gabriel Wings Display Team in the newly branded Pitts Specials, sponsored by Control Instruments Automotive. The planes bear one of South Africa's most recognised brands in the automotive industry – Gabriel shock absorbers, with vibrant striking red and white livery.

The bold colour scheme designed by Grant Fraser (strategic planning manager and Gabriel Wings project manager) and Louis Blom (sales and marketing director) was refined by Paula Missing (graphic designer) of Control Instruments Automotive. There can be no doubt that the striking colour scheme of red lettering on a white airframe will stand out exceptionally

well against a clear blue sky. The contract with Control Instruments has been running for eight years and the Three Pitts Specials that were previously branded Shurlok appeared on the cover of the July 2004 edition of African Pilot. Some years later the corporate branding of Control Instruments followed for two years, but to date the new branding is certainly the most

Gabriel Wings Display Team - Photograph Athol Franz



striking. Grant Fraser said: "We are absolutely thrilled at the response to the new look of the airplanes and the professionalism Scully and his team display at these events. It is awesome to be part of such a professional operation. For us at Gabriel Wings we wanted to make sure that these were the best looking planes at any airshow."

He continued: "Our vision with the Gabriel Wings team is to create excitement at a retail level. All of our customers have an opportunity to become Executive Gabriel Wings members and the result of membership is that this allows someone at a sales person level to qualify equally with a person who may be at the level of managing director. Once the person in the company becomes a member they are rewarded at the same level."

Louis Blom commented: "What we want to do is to create excitement around the Gabriel brand at the point of sale. Therefore the first choice presented to a customer in terms of shock absorbers will be a Gabriel



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product. Part of the vision includes encouraging the sales people to want to participate in the competition the company will be offering so that the reward will be a flight in a Gabriel Wings Pitts Special."

DISPLAY PILOTS' EXPERIENCE

Highly experienced team leader, senior airline captain Scully Levin has a total flying time in excess of 24 700 hours, flying types that vary from Boeing 747s and Airbus A340s with South African Airways (SAA) to tiny Pitts Specials and Zlins. Scully has been central to the South African airshow scene for the past 23 years.

Businessman Arnie Meneghelli has accumulated some 4 000 hours mainly in Harvards, Pitts Specials and Zlins. Arnie owns the Flying Lions team of five immaculate T6 Harvards, which have also been re-branded for the 2008 airshow season. Arnie has been involved with the Harvards, Pitts Specials and Zlin display teams for the past ten years.

Scully's son airline pilot, Ellis has accumulated more than 10 000 hours whilst flying for SAA, as well as aerobatic planes including the Pitts Special, T6 Harvard and Zlin types. Ellis gained his flying licence at the age of seventeen and has been part of the display teams for fourteen years. Keeping it in the family, Scully's daughter airline pilot, Sally Bates first completed her BSc. degree in Human Sciences at Rhodes University before writing her Commercial Licence (COM) and ultimately her Airline Transport Licence (ATP). Sally flies professionally for SAA as a first officer. She has been involved with various aspects of the team's support for the past three years, and is now entering the airshow scene as a display pilot.

Senior SAA captain, Stewart Lithgow has accumulated about 20 000 hours. Stewart and fellow SAA captain Dennis Spence became famous for landing SAA's first Boeing 747 - Lebonbo at Rand Airport in 2003, where she now sits out her retirement. Stewart will be assisting the team as an airshow display pilot at times when the busy schedule of other team members means that they are not available for airshow duty. In June 2004 Stewart once again joined the Flying Lions Harvard as a display pilot and has been flying formation aerobatics as well as the solo position for the last three years.

The pilots involved in this air-to-air photographic sortie were Scully Levin as number one, and Sally Bates as number two flying two-seat Pitts S2Bs. Arnie Menneghelli flew the single seat Pitts S2S as number three in the

formation. This famous Pitts Special was originally owned some 22 years ago by Patty Wagstaff, arguably America's and the world's foremost female aerobatic pilot, before being brought to South Africa by Scully's team. The 'chase plane' a T-6 Harvard was expertly flown for the photography session by Stewart Lithgow. The Gabriel Wings branded Pitts Specials will make appearances at most airshows within a 300 to 400 mile radius of Rand Airport where they are based. In addition they will provide staff incentive flights for Gabriel staff who excel in their positions. These staff members will be taken on an aerobatic flip of a lifetime and become proud members of the Gabriel Wings Club. The first public outing of the Gabriel Wings aerobatic team took place on Sunday 3rd February overhead the 'Round the Island' yacht race near Deneysville on the Vaal Dam. ✈

AFRICAN PILOT'S PITTS SPECIAL FLIGHT EXPERIENCE

As an incentive to enter this month's cover competition, African Pilot will be offering a 30 minute flight in one of the Gabriel Wings Pitts S2Bs for the first person who answers the three questions on page 5 of this edition. The first correct entry drawn during April will be notified by telephone and will need to take up his/her flight within six months of the announcement. African Pilot would like to thank the Gabriel Wings Team for the opportunity to take the pictures that illustrate this article and for the level of professionalism always demonstrated by all members of the team.

Scully Levin, Sally Bates, Arnie Meneghelli

