

POPS Nationals Oct 2019, JOS records, JFTR

The POPS organization is a group of jumpers with a minimum age of 40 years old, with members extended out to JONS who are Jumpers Over Ninety. Yes, you read that correctly, 90 years old. While this is obviously the smallest subgroup of the POPS organization, it is certainly a statement on this great sport of skydiving, how many other sports can boast having this age group? Skydive Spaceland Houston, in the quaint Texas town of Rosharon, has one of the best dropzones in the United States, and was the host to this group of mature jumpers in October. The entire dropzone, other than the swoop pond area, was all beautifully manicured grass, not a drop off dirt to be found. The only thing that topped the landing area was the packing area.

While the temperatures and humidity were high during the entire event, the indoor, carpeted, air-conditioned packing area, certainly made up for the heat! The packing area was also a mere 15 feet from the loading area, so you could wait inside the air-conditioned building, and look out through the windows until you saw the plane taxing up to the loading area. Although, as visiting jumpers quickly found out, if you jumped a camera or full face helmet, waiting to the last minute to go outside did not give your visor or lens time to adjust, so you did need to stand outside for a few seconds before boarding otherwise they would fog up.

In addition to the POPS Nationals jumpers at the dropzone, the JOS guys (Jumpers Over Seventy) were there to knock out some records, which they did, but more on that later. Marian Sparks was also there to raise money for her JFTR (Jump For The Rose) charity, a charity that raises money for breast cancer awareness. It was a full house in the hangar with the DZ continuing their operations as usual, along with even a few other events going on that same week. There was no registration fee for this POPS event, so manifest had to check their cheat sheet for prices when jumpers arrived and paid for their jumps. Jumpers simply paid a few dollars more per jump per event they were competing in, this was a great way to handle supplemental costs involved with the event. Thanks to Larissa Weeks, Charra Elliot, Tanya Swank, and Alicia Karbanoff for taking care of booking loads and checking in jumpers!

The standard for the POPS events is to have Wednesday be a fun jump / team practice day, so some of the jumpers started to arrive on Wednesday. Top POP James "Guido" Davis was already there setting things up a few days in advance, so he greeted POPS as they showed up, then pointed them towards manifest so they could get some jumps in. When the Top POP showed up, Christy West helped him put into play all the small details that Scott Latinis had been organizing over the past year. A special thanks to Steven Boyd and Steve Boyd, Sr., the owners of the DZ, not only did they bend over backwards to make things happen, Steven was also out there getting in some jumps. It's always nice when owners are jumpers too.

Often forgotten, but always integral parts to any DZ are the packers and the pilots, so thanks to all the packers for getting the jumpers ready to jump, and to Ryan Reed for getting the jumpers in the blue sky.

Thursday is the day that has been set as the start to the competitions with a 0800 briefing of the 4way FS Scrambles event. The FS Team competition was put back on the table for competitors, but sadly no teams showed up, hopefully in the future teams will come out. The POPS World Meet is looking for a US team to represent in 2020, so if there are any teams out there interested in representing the USA, please contact: TopPOPUSA@gmail.com The last POPS World Meet the US took home the Gold!

Some of the JOS jumpers joined the 4way FS Scrambles and used the event as practice jumps for the record attempts they would try the next day. One of the two JOS teams even ended up placing third. The first and second place teams were mainly POPS members. The first place team made an impressive score in their first round of jumps.

On Day Two of the event, Friday, the JOS guys broke off to start working on their record attempts, while the POPS members continued on with the next event, Sport Accuracy. By the end of the four days of the event, nine new members had signed up for POPS, most competing in the events as well. The dropzone was having a Sport Accuracy event themselves on Saturday, so it was agreed just to make one target, which was a 30 meter diameter circle with a one meter yellow target in the middle, which could be seen from altitude! The object was to land as close to the yellow target in the center, standing up, stopping all forward movement inside the 30m circle. There were three rounds of jumps and competition was tight. There used to be a 200 sq/ft max canopy size, but the new Top POP has since revised that so that heavier jumpers could jump their larger canopies and still be safe and join the competition. The new revised rules used a 1:1 wing loading as a guide in place of the 200 sq/ft canopy max.

The sun rose Saturday and glistened off the grassy Texas field as the dropzone brought out a comfy recliner to set up for the traditional final event of the boogie, the Hit N Rock competition. The same yellow circle that was used for the Sport Accuracy competition was used as the target for the Hit N Rock competition. Normally if a dropzone has a peapit, that is used as the target area, but that was the ONLY thing lacking from this DZ. The management was amenable to move the target area to a section of the main landing area so viewers could watch up close the fun and frivolity involved in this competition. If you didn't compete in the Hit N Rock, you HAD to at least come out of the hangar and watch it! Adding to the fun and spirit of support, all the competitors were encouraged, and agreed, to all wear pink bras in support for Marian Spark's JFTR charity. Hit N Rock is a combination of speed and accuracy. The accuracy comes with the jumpers trying to land as close as possible to the yellow target circle, the fun and speed comes after that. The next step is for the jumper to remove their parachute and container off their back, sometimes the rig comes off smoothly, and some....not so elegantly. Now the competitor must touch the yellow circle, usually with their foot, but any body part will do, then run to the big comfy recliner. Time starts when a body part touches the ground on landing, preferably your feet, and time stops when your butt is in the chair, the fastest time wins!

The top three competitors were the same for both the Hit N Rock and the Sport Accuracy, with Harry Moore coming out on top for both! Second place for the Hit N Rock was the Top POP "Guido", with third place going to James Harrison (former Top POP 11), these two swapped places for Sport Accuracy.

In FS 4way Scrambles competition, the first place team consisted of new members: Jeff Stagg and Bill Johnson, with existing POPS members: Patie Duttlinger and Marshall Madden.

Second place FS was led by Harry Moore, the only thing he came in second on, with teammates Bryan "Air Wolf" Wolford, Gary Barron, and Jim Harrison, with cameraman Felipe Vancelette.

Third place went to the JOS team of Bob Stroud, Joe Pete LoRusso, John Bates, and Gary Eve with cameraman Kirk Theobald.

The Hit N Rock had a unique trophy this year thanks to the organizer at Spaceland Houston, Scott Latinis. All three places received a ceramic "old man" (gnome) in a rocking chair, synonymous of the POPS logo and the Hit N Rock event itself. The trophy had a plaque on the side noting the placing and event.

The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners also received certificates from Parachute Labs Inc, one was for 25% off a new canopy, the second was 25% off a new, custom built Racer, and the 3rd was for 20% off a new AngelFire Reserve. Thanks to David Sakal of Jump Shack for those generous donations, as well as the pull-up cords, closing loops, ditty bags, and T-shirts!

All these events couldn't have been scored, recorded, and judged without the help of some of the spouses, to include Betty Moore and Linda Kommers, with Judge Tooth at the helm.

The hardest working gal on the dropzone, and biggest thanks go out to Stephanie Behnke! She was the go between for the Top POP and EVERYONE at the dropzone. She made sure the targets were in the right place at the right time, the loads were organized correctly, the banners and wind blades were out, you name it, she got it done!

While the POPS were challenging each other on their accuracy skills, the JOS guys were up in the sky trying to set and break records. Everyone got an opportunity to participate in up to 12-way record attempts. On the last day, it came down to JOS making a new WORLD record with a 2pt 10way, breaking the existing 2pt 9way from CA set in 2013, and setting a new TX record. There was a 5-way base and outside stingers changing from left hand grips to right hand leg grips for the sequence. The Top POP joined them as their video guy and it just so happened this was the jump they made their record, so he got a firsthand view and immediately confirmed their record. Subsequently an impromptu party was held with home brewed adult beverages, 'gator chili, and music by several JOS musicians. Jumpers consisted of: Joseph L. Taylor, Joe Pete LoRusso, Ray Kuemmel, John Bates, Tom Morris, Gary Eve, James Parker, Jim Culhane, Doug Jaques, and Bob Stroud.

JOS also SET a new WORLD record with a 4pt 2way jump, made by: John Bates and Ray Kuemmel.

Joe Taylor, the JOS organizer, also dug up a TX record he set in 2008 for the most jumps in 24hrs, 65, which is a TX record, so the JOS organization came away this weekend with three new records, not bad for a group of jumpers all over seventy years old! JOS also presented Marian Sparks and JFTR a donation of \$300 for the cause.

Lastly, thanks to all the POPS jumpers who came out to support this event, or just catch up with old friends. For anyone wishing to join POPS, a NEW website was created on 1 January, which includes an ONLINE application form that only takes about 3 minutes to fill out, then you can also pay online with PayPal the ONE time \$30 fee, and BOOM, you're all signed up! An email will be sent when your package and membership card is in the mail. If you've sent a request to join our Facebook page, make sure to check your Messenger for a reply.

Simply go to: POPS-USA.com/applications

For existing POPS/SOS/JOS/JOES/JONS members, you can also use this same form to UPDATE your information. There is NO charge for updates, simply click the SUBMIT button at the bottom, and you're done!

- Top POP James "Guido" Davis -