

March 2022 Launch

As I pulled into the field Saturday morning, a turkey vulture was pointed into the wind from the south and just hovering. This is generally not a good sign if you're hoping to fly rockets. Then I got out of the car and started helping with the LCO tent. Gloria Jarvis and I had serious doubts about the tent's likelihood of making it through the day, but Jim was confident, so we pressed on. As I was setting up the low-power pads, I couldn't just set the 7" diameter, 3/32" thick steel blast deflectors on the heads without putting in a rod at the same time because they would start fluttering and then fly off. You could hear the wind whistling around the high-power rails from the road. It was that kind of day.

But apparently we have a bunch of hearty (or foolhardy) folks in the group, because by the end of the day we had recorded 39 flights. There were actually some periods of relative calm during the day, but most of the day was spent with winds in the 15mph range. As you would expect, a lot of the recoveries covered a lot of distance.

Perhaps the most interesting flight of the day belonged to Ishaan Patel, who patiently waited for hours before flying his custom NAOS rocket using one the BPS.space thrust vectoring systems on a finless rocket with an F25. Things started off ok, and it was vertical in spite of the breeze, but then it arced over and there was an early ejection for some reason, and things got worse from there. We're still not sure of exactly what happened (I doubt that the wind helped), but there is video of the flight and I'm sure that Ishaan will figure it out and be back for another attempt.

We also had several TARC teams (Harmony School, Team Void, and Westwood HS) out practicing their technique, although I'm not sure how reliable the info they gathered was given the windy conditions. They all flew on a variety of F motors, and some of the flights seemed to be getting pretty close to the prescribed profile.

We had a couple of familiar faces that we hadn't seen for a while. David Seaver came out and opened things up with his Little John on an H219. Unfortunately, it found its way into the impenetrable thicket, but he headed out there with his trusty hatchet and came back later with his rocket in hand. I don't know if the hatchet was involved or not. Stan Marshall (Bryan's father) came down from Ardmore, OK to see if central TX winds compare to those in OK. He flew a PML Small Endeavor on a G115.

Gordon Bain put up a couple of flights, including his Mad Cow Nike Smoke on an F50 and his Nike Stretch on a J425. Somehow that latter flight was recovered within 100 yards of the pad, which was definitely not the norm for the day.

The real activity of the day came with certification flights, with teams from UT and Rice and I'm not sure where else. We had 10 L1 cert attempts and 2 L2 cert attempts. Those were some determined individuals, given the wind. I believe that nine of the L1 attempts were successful:

- Liam Manley on an H255.
- Lovin (McLovin?) George on an H255.
- Ian Rundle on an H255.
- Warren Rose on an H255.
- Mark Lopatofsky on an H255.
- Aliya Belay on an H255.
- Niko Chapas on an I470 (bonus points for dual deployment).
- Urvi (no last name) on an I470
- Rafael Angeles on an I470.

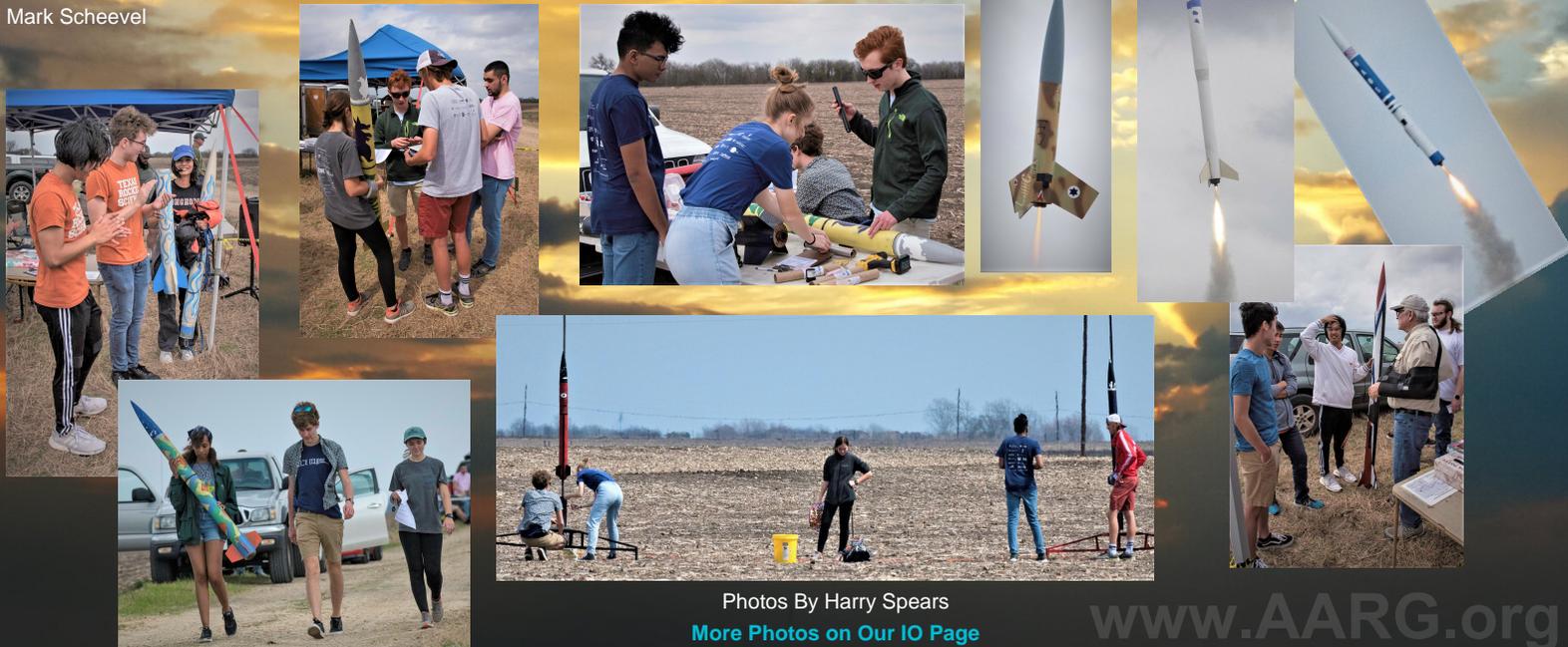
The lone L1 failure came when Ryan Mok's I470 flight suffered a cato. The post mortem revealed that the CTI motor casing had suffered a failure of the rear closure. Both L2 attempts (Jake Sperry on a J270 and Wes Prince with a 4" Honest John on a J760) failed, and both for the same disappointing reason: separation at main deployment. I'm sure they'll be back to try again soon.

Jim Jarvis and Bryan Marshall unveiled their latest piece of handiwork: the control section for a 4" canard-stabilized rocket. It's a part 3D-printed, part CNC-milled, full-on genius piece of design, and you owe it to yourself to get a peek at it. It's a truly wonderful time to be a tinkerer with all of the amazing technology available to us.

Finally, on a personal note, I'd like to thank all of the folks (especially David Ivey!) who were so patient with my grandson Simon who came up for the launch. He had a fantastic time! We picked an Estes Prowler out of the big pile o' rockets and stuffed a C6-3 in it. Slow lift-off, pretty vertical flight, ejection near the top at ~300 ft, and then a 1/4 mile recovery :-). He is infatuated with the rocket!

On to Apache Pass!

Mark Scheevel



Photos By Harry Spears
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