

# TRIPOLI Vegas 12

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## Turkey Shoot '95

by Brent McNeely

The morning of the launch I packed up my rockets, some food, and the usual stuff and hopped in the car while my wife was still asleep in bed. It was about 8:00 am when I arrived at Eldorado Dry Lake (about 30 mins. from my house). I couldn't believe how many people were there! I estimate there was about thirty cars with about a hundred people. For the first time I saw vendors set up at a launch selling everything from posters to rocket kits & motors. Among the vendors were Aerotech, Kosdon, High Power Rocketry Magazine, Mojave Desert High Power, and Atomic Rockets from Phoenix. I ended up buying a few feet of Kevlar shock cord from Atomic Rockets along with some wadding. After taking a quick look around I helped get the pads and launch system set up. I put my Mantis Launch pad out on the number three spot. We ended up with a total of seven active launch numbers, some with two pads each.

Les Derkovitz got on the PA system at about 8:30 and welcomed everyone to the launch and explained the launching procedure, then several folks made their way to the pads with their rockets. Things didn't go so well for the first four or five launches. It seems that everyone's igniters didn't work and for a bit we wondered if we were getting power thru the launch system. The first to actually get a lift off was Chris Gittersenke with his super scale Alpha I on a G6410W; he had a very nice flight with a perfect recovery. The next off he pad didn't do so well. Dale Ainsworth launched his Aerotech Arcus on a G65 and on at apogee the chute didn't open and he had a fin stall recovery. It seems like Dave Carver tried to do the same thing. The next launch

was his NCR Eliminator on an H97. Dave's Eliminator blew a nozzle and the rocket did a fin stall recovery. We hoped this wouldn't become a trend! Robert Hutcheson crossed his fingers as his F51 Black Brant left the pad on an F74. Robert had pulled his motor out of storage wondering if there should be an expiration date on it. That F motor was made in 1976. Well, things didn't go well. His Black Brant arched under power and stripped the chute. Better luck next time.

Dale Miller finally broke the bad run of events with a perfect flight with his Phantom 4000 on an Aerotech G80. Dale actually won the Phantom kit in the drawing at the Turkey Shoot last year. Nice flight!! Gabe Ainsworth learned how to prep a reloadable Aerotech motor and sent his Aerotech Aeraux corkscrewing up into the sky. The chute deployed without a hitch and recovery was no problem. Rolly Blair put his Estes Tornado on a pad and sent it out of sight on an Estes C6. Because of the number of high powered flights most of the rest of the Estes low powered flights were launched down range. Occasionally there would be a heads up as an Estes rocket would arc overhead and lawn dart into the dirt behind us making the launch all that more interesting.

The wake up call of the morning came with the launch of Brian



Riordom's scratch built rocket. Heads snapped up when his Kosdon I500 sent the rocket screaming into the air. Excellent flight!! I felt a bit out of place as my rocket came up next in the list. I had picked up an Estes Super Big Bertha at liquidation prices for \$8. I called Estes and got the Broadsword stickers and painted it as a Broadsword. The rocket looked great on the pad, but a little small compared to those just in front of me. But all went well at lift off on a D12 motor, the chute came out and it had a soft landing right next to the pad. Don Gittersenke didn't have as good of luck. He sent his VB Extreme up with a G80 motor. We weren't sure what happened but the rocket came apart way off the ground and the motor pin-wheeled back to earth with the chute shredding. Not good. Things

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didn't go well on the next launch either. Dennis Kieselhorst launched his carbon composite rocket with an H-1000 motor. The result was a massive disintegration mid-flight. Hundreds of small pieces came fluttering down. We are still trying to figure that one out.

The first unique flight of the day was by Doug Gerrand with a scratch built rocket loaded with a Bell & Howell movie camera. Doug had a perfect flight on a J415. We were hoping to get a viewing of his flight, but were unable to view it before submitting this article. Kevin Metzler had an impressive flight with a long burn J135 sending his Rod Max under seven seconds of thrust. The chute deployed by an altimeter at apogee. I really love those long burn motors!

I grabbed a quick lunch of a couple of sandwiches and watched Amy Kelly launch her Lil' Nuke on a G50 for a nice flight. Dale Ainsworth showed up again for his third flight on his Arcus under an H180. He had the usual cork screw flight with a perfect recovery. Rick DuVall flew the second two stager of the day, a Falcon+ under two I284 motors. It was a spectacular flight with great recovery. Our hearts stopped at one point during the flight, just after the first stage ejected. There was a long delay before the second stage fired up--enough of a delay to make us wonder if we were going to see this rocket buried in the dirt. But, I guess Rick knew what he was doing and everything turned out OK. Whew! Larry Holady got another flight in on an Aerotech G80 for a perfect flight. Ron Dentron and Cameron Anderson flew a LOC Lil' Nuke powered by an H180 motor for a nice flight. Good job guys.

Jim Cornwell made quite a stir when he brought out his super-scale nosquito loaded with a J180 motor. I had seen a few of his mosquitoes in High Powered Rocketry magazine before, but I had never seen one up close and in person. You just have to smile when you look at it. It is just so cool. Nice! After a couple of misfires, Jim got the Mosquito off the ground with a screaming whoosh of power. The rocket went straight as an arrow off the pad and way up into the air. Wow! It was one of the most impressive flights of the day.

One of the rockets I had eyed early in the day was Mike Gillette's NorthStar (Rocketry Dyne Systems). This giant ten foot red fiberglass rocket was layed out on a stand for all to see. Mike and his wife brought the kids up from California in two cars just to send this rocket into the air. The big rocket was powered on a K14000 motor. Everyone gathered to watch the rocket leave the pad in a blasting roar of sound. The lift off was beautiful, but unfortunately the shock cord broke at deployment and the huge body came tumbling back to the ground. Mike got his Northstar back at the expense of a broken fin.

Jim Hart had the biggest motor of the day. His six foot V-2 was loaded with an M2100. This demo kit really looked good. I snapped a few photos of it in the morning along with its twin which Jim planned to launch on Sunday. Lift off was spectacular and the rocket climbed into the air straight up, then it arched over our heads headed east. I lost sight of it as it continued to climb. Apparently the trackers lost it too. I guess things like that happen with big motors. The rocket was found a while later by a guy in an ultralight plane across the highway about a half mile from the launch site. I saw what was left of it the next day. I never found out exactly what happened, but by looking at what was left, the parachute was still inside the fiberglass body. But the whole thing was smashed in a mish mash of parts, almost like an omelette, with the chute appearing here and there among the parts. All I could do was shake my head in wonder. Geez...

Look for a longer version of this article in HPR in a few months!

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Launch Dates

- December 23 ... El Dorado Dry Lake

Meeting Dates

- December 21 ... Vo-Tech High School Green Valley

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