

Hamster Dance 4 Launch Report

This launch report is a bit late, seeing that both Hamster Dance and Balls happened late in September, but better late than never. Hamster Dance is billed as the “weenie EX launch” being that only Research motors can be used, but they must be single use, with no metal casings, and no reloadables. Making a single use motor is harder than it sounds, with several flyers having their motors cato this year. Other rules are that the rocket can’t weigh more than five pounds and (new this year) there is a 15K altitude limit.

The date for the launch was supposed to be Thursday, September 18th, the day before the start of Balls, and was to take place near the 3 Mile Entrance to Black Rock Desert. However, the forest fires in California had a say about that. Smoke from the fires was blowing across the state and what was usually unlimited visibility across the desert was limited to about one thousand feet. The mountains around us could not be seen, and the smell of burning wood was heavy. The wind was also high, so high that it postponed the launch until the next day, during the Balls launch.

The next day dawned with perfect weather, temps in the 80’s (a record high for Balls), light wind out of the northeast, which blew the smoke away, and no clouds. We flew off the closest pads, which at Balls are the M pads, 500 feet away.



At left is Bill Good Sr. with his minimum sized rocket, which won the best looking and lightest weight awards, unfortunately it went unstable because of a motor case burn through at the nozzle and crashed near the pads.

At right is Gary Dickinson with his Blackhawk 38 carbon fiber minimum diameter entry, which won the Alpha Hamster 2014 award for hitting 9574 feet.





David Wilkins (left) flew in from Australia and built a LOC Vulcanite in his motel room right before the launch. He is shown turning on his electronics. He had one of the few successful flights of the day.

Larry Benek from Pittsburgh, PA (right) had his entry, which won the award for heaviest rocket, go horizontal a hundred feet off the pad and do a spectacular land shark on the other side of the parking area.



Ken Finwall (left) poses with his minimum diameter 38mm entry, which unfortunately catood at ignition.

Former Tripoli president and NOTRA member, Ken Good displays his demonstration rocket (right). The rocket was a three-stage rack rocket called KG-15B, Exeter II. The motors were all AeroTech single use, 29 mm. They were a G-125/G-125/G-80 staging in that order. It worked perfectly using a Featherweight Raven 3 to control all staging and dual deployment as well. The expended motors were expelled from the airframe.





At left, Chris Pearson poses with his 38mm diameter entry using the same 29mm I 235 motor that he flew at Hamster Dance two years ago. He was expecting it to hit 9000 feet, however it never left the pad when soft-cured propellant caused the motor to cato at ignition, blowing the rocket in half.

While Hamster Dance was going on, other people were prepping their rockets. At right is Jim Callahan from Pittsburgh with his third Balls Level 3 certification attempt. The third time was the charm as he had a perfect flight and became a newly minted L3 flier.



Deb Koloms brought her latest fur covered rocket, which unfortunately went unstable and crashed without having the recovery system activate. Deb had other altimeter problems with her Ravens in a high altitude flight, which allowed the rocket to impact the playa nearly at Mach.



Below are some photos of people who were prepping and flying their rockets around us as the Hamster Dance participants were flying.

The guys from Rockets magazine (left) smile as they prep their minimum diameter M powered rocket. You can see the Black Rock mountains in the distance. They are six miles away. The day before you could not see them because of the smoke from the fires in California.

For more info on Hamster Dance go to:

<http://www.hamsterdancelaunch.com>

To learn more about Tripoli Gerlach, go to:

<http://www.tripoligerlach.org>





Some pictures from the Tripoli Gerlach annual meeting & banquet and Hamster Dance award ceremony.

A big thank you to the two people most responsible for the Banquet: Gerald Muex for his generosity and Jeanne Leininger for the afternoon spent preparing a great meal.

At center, talking with Deb Koloms is Vern Knowles, owner of Multitronics and creator of Kate, the talking rocket GPS.



Tripoli Gerlach Secretary Tom Blazanin with Gary Dickinson, winner of the 2014 Alpha Hamster award.

For more information about Kate, go to:

www.multitronix.com