

Whether or not you achieve the results you'd hoped for, preparing for and competing in any kind of world championship event is sure to leave you with memories and friendships you'll never forget. And so it was as me and fellow F5D US team member Bruce Brown finishing lower than we had either hoped or anticipated in the 2014 F5D World Championships in Turnau, Austria.

For starters, our 3-man team never materialized, so it was just me and Bruce and his father Charles Brown.

My supportive wife Wendy accompanied me on the 2-1/2 hour drive up to Chicago, O'Hare. I checked my planes as luggage in an oversize, heavy-duty gun case that was scrutinized at a separate checkpoint off to the side. The TSA officer X-rayed my case and gave me a reassuring thumbs up! For carry-on, my LiPo heater box doubled as my LiPo carrier filled with about twenty LiPos. I also had a transmitter case with my primary and a backup transmitter. Much to my relief, the cases sailed right through security without as much as a blink of an eye! The flight to Vienna was a doable eight hours and my gun case with airplanes inside made the trip unscathed!



The two-hour drive from the airport to the hotel near the site wasn't bad – most of the cars are some version or another of a station wagon and the all the vans look kind of “funny” (but would make great airplane haulers back here in the States!). I checked into my room and put together my airplanes.



The next day I was greeted by the friendly and familiar faces of teammate Bruce and Charles who gave me an impromptu tour. The next day it was cold, wet and rainy, but we headed to the practice site where I managed to put in several flights getting three of my four planes airborne. I was a little surprised to find my lap times were even better than back home, but in retrospect flying around an imaginary course is a little different than the real thing.

The Turnau Cup warmup race was a bit of a disappointment. I understand and expect some delays at our local, home-grown AMA races—we have local clubs doing their best and we all appreciate their hard work. But magnify those delays and snafus by about ten and that's how it was for the two-day warmup race. The entire course was repositioned a couple of times and required a few more minor adjustments resulting in even more delays.

In spite of all that, I flew respectable rounds and, through the misfortunes of racing made some new friends. During one of my races, for some reason my plane suddenly spiraled out of control out and over the horizon somewhere beyond pylon 1. Upon returning to the pit area I learned that I had a mid-air with one of the Swiss guys, so I walked over to their tent to find out what happened and offer my humble apologies. Much to my relief the guy said “hey, no problem man!”



There I meet my new bestest buddy Michael Untermoser with whom I had the collision. I never even saw his plane. Michael was able to manage his down safely, but my Avionik was destroyed. Oh well, one down.

Michael was more than gracious offering me a Red Bull to commemorate our new friendship. It was also a relief to learn it wasn't an equipment failure that did my plane in.

Unfortunately, round 1 of the WC was even worse than the mid-air. I enlisted the assistance of another new-found friend Frederic Gregoire from the French team to call for me. Something went wrong with the launch and my Viper angled straight toward the ground resulting in mortal structural damage from a collision with a mislaid sheet-metal runway marker. Round one score; 200. That was about the lowest I've ever been. My grief was multiplied by Frederic's grief who felt just as bad as I. Well, five-thousand miles from home, in front of some of the best pylon racers in the world, the only option is to suck it up, retrieve another model and clear my head for the next round.



Fortunately the WC moved along a little better than the warmup race and we managed four rounds a day for four days—quite the grind. Other than the round one anomaly, I flew pretty well and felt like I fit in. I flew my red Viper about half the rounds and broke out my second Avionik for the other half. Although I represented myself well flying smooth and under control, my course around the pylons is still too large – I definitely need to tighten it up around 2 & 3 (same old song). My “loose” flying combined with an unfamiliar caller and going the wrong way on propeller adjustments (I should have gone smaller to conserve energy rather than going larger to increase speed) netted me the results I deserved. But in any endeavor experience contributes to improvement.



By the time the WC was over I was definitely ready to come home. The Austrians were wonderful hosts and it sure is a beautiful country. The experiences I enjoyed and the friendships I made in Austria are ever-lasting, but the experiences and bonds I've made through pylon racing back here in the States are just as meaningful. Plus, I get to enjoy them each time the pylon racing season comes back around in the spring time.

