We did it!

We took off a few minutes before 7:00 PM on Sunday August 4, 2013 and landed Monday the following day a bit after 1:00 PM

We therefore have submitted an official FAI World Record Claim of 18 hours, 6 minutes and 13 seconds for the team of Andre Mellin, Dave Brown and Joe Mekina

This is for RC Electric Duration, FAI Class F5 Open #171 - Aeroplane - Electrical Motor Rechargeable Sources

It should be noted that this record is for what the FAI considers to be a model airplane, limited to less than 5 kg in weight with a maximum surface are of 150 dm squared. Though there are many other detailed rules that apply, the only other major ones that apply for the record in this class were that the model must be powered by rechargeable batteries charged prior to flight and the motor must supply power to the fully unfolded prop 98% of the flight time. Other categories exist for using solar powered techniques to recharge the batteries in flight.

It will be a few months till the record if formally recognized as “official” by the FAI. We are indeed already working towards that end.

We raised the bar on the existing record by over 5 hours! The old record of 12 hours 36 minutes and 47 seconds was set in France in 2008 by Vincent Labrouve of France

All said and done, after looking at the data, we truly extracted every last usable electron from the batteries in a very efficient way in setting this record.

All things truly came together in the effort, the model fully matured thanks to Andre’s continued dedication and Dave Brown’s help with the refinement of the power system (which happened just in the last month or so), the weather was perfect, all pilots as well as the contest directors and support crew were available. The stars shined, the International Space station streaked by in a highly visible pass while we were flying, we were within one day of a true new moon, so the bright light of an illuminated moon was not a factor, we did not get any fog in the morning, etc… Truly things lined up perfectly! One of the many touching moments was when Andre played the national anthem of the United States of America on his I-phone just after our pilot and crew meeting prior to flight! This nearly brought tears to my eyes

Personally speaking, it was truly a pleasure to be a part of Andre’s project and I am sure the other members feel the same way. I think the things we learned as part of the team helped result in the overall success of this project. The sum total of the inputs of the individual on the team far exceeded what any of us could have contributed on our own. Personally, being a part of Andre designing an building this purpose built point design model was truly and experience I enjoyed. I was continually impressed with Andre employing the various technical solutions from not only the various RC airplane disciplines but also from the various Free Flight and Rocket disciplines. This combined with extensive research into the late Paul MacCready’s highly successful efforts in human-powered flight led to the design and refinement of Andre’s magnificent flying machine

I must say it was a pleasure to have Dave Brown on the team. In particular his flying skills and flight strategies were a major contributor to the overall success of this record flight. Though the lion’s share of the flight was flown between 300 and 500 feet, one daytime excursion during the thermal part of the flight on Monday saw the model at an altitude upwards of 3,000 feet. I was very impressed with
Dave’s ability to see the model at that altitude! I wished I had that kind of eyesight! Thanks for your truly world class piloting Dave!

Well done Andre, thanks for letting us all be a part of your adventure!

Having spoken to Andre extensively, after we set the record as we packed up for home, the two of us discussed how it is our hope that the friendships that were made will continue in the future.

A big thanks to our on-site support crew who provided outstanding support during this actual record flight: Andre Mellin – project chief and pilot, Dave Brown – pilot and technical advisor, Joe Mekina – pilot and technical advisor, Ojars Skujins - Contest Director, Albie Salas – backup Contest Director and official witness, Dave Gerspacher – support crew, Wayne Norris – official witness

And special thanks to Wayne and Kathy Norris for the use of Norris Field. And to Wayne for cooking us pancakes on the camp stove Monday morning just after we passed the old record. We also appreciated Kathy who kept bringing us birthday cakes to eat (Monday was Wayne’s birthday)

And thanks to all who have supported in one way or another at various times since this project began in earnest over a year ago. Your technical assistance, ideas and even the encouragement expressed by many of you over this time was greatly appreciated and helped us as we continued in our quest

Attached is a 3-view of the record setting model and a few shots during takeoff. The team photo after the flight will follow after I touch it up a bit.

I plan to tell the world about this effort, now that we have achieve our goal, though various virtual media, via the internet. I have also spoken to Jay Smith, the editor of Model Aviation and I will be writing future Model Aviation Article about this project.

Please feel free to pass this info to your friends and spread the word if you so desire.

Attached is a 3-view of the world record setting model, and a few pictures of the model. I will follow with a few more pictures including a team photo as I get time to touch them up.

Joe Mekina