

# And they're off: Red Bull Pilots ready to race MX

(Editor's note: This is the third and final chapter in the Red Bull pilot series.)

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For The Record

With only one week left before the first race of the 2009 Red Bull Air Race World Championship season teams worked down to the wire in preparation for the fastest and most exciting flying event in the world.

Fifteen of the highest ranking, most qualified pilots in the world are set to compete during this season beginning with the first race in Abu Dhabi on April 16 and 17. Five of these top pilots will be flying the state of the art MXS aerobatic aircraft which is manufactured in Wilkes County by MX Aircraft.

Peter Besenyei, one of the most well known and highly decorated pilots in aviation today and

developer of the Red Bull Air Race; Matt Hall, decorated Top Gun combat fighter instructor and former pilot in both the Royal Australian Air Force and United States Air Force; Alejandro 'Alex' Maclean, multi-championship winning pilot; Sergey Rakhmanin, one of the most accomplished aerobatics pilots in the world; and Nigel Lamb, decorated Air Force pilot, instructor and motion picture stunt pilot have all chosen to own, fly and compete in the MXS.

Besenyei, Hall, Maclean and Rakhmanin spent the month of March in Wilkes with final 'test and tune' pre-race sessions. Lamb's final pre-race preparation took place in his home country of England.

Alejandro 'Alex' Maclean, lovingly called the 'Flying Matador' of Madrid Spain, is the child of a Spanish mother and Scottish father. His love of flight started early in his childhood. And, like many, he built and collected model airplanes as a fun and educational hobby. He later incorporated remote control airplanes into his squadron. By the young age of 18 he put himself into the cockpit of his very own Ultralight Aircraft where he fully embraced his passion and followed it above the clouds.

"Everyone should always follow their passions in life," said Maclean. "Whatever it may be and wherever it may take them. I am doing what I love, my passion of flying. For that I am very lucky and so very grateful. I wish that for everyone."

That passion has taken Maclean to higher heights as he earned the 10th place in World "Unlimited" Championship, first place in the Lithuanian Aerobatic Championship, two times Spanish Aerobatics championship, and became Captain of the Spanish Aerobatics team in 2005.

The three years Maclean has spent flying the Red Bull Air Race have enforced what many already knew about him. He is a pilot with a passion, a kind heart and a drive to take him far in the world of competitive flying.

Touching down, he embraces life with his wife and young sons and the somewhat calmer activities of horseback riding and waterskiing before once again returning to the skies to pilot helicopters and experience the ultimate aerial maneuvers of skydiving. Maclean is also an accomplished TV and film producer.

Sergey Rakhmanin, the smooth and daring pilot from St. Petersburg, Russia, is one of the highest decorated aerobatics pilots of the world. Rakhmanin won an overall bronze medal in the World Glider Aerobatic Championship, overall Champion European Aerobatic Championship, overall silver medal European Aerobatic Championship, overall Champion World Aerobatic Championship, overall silver European Aerobatic Championship and overall Champion in World Aerobatic Championship. Not limited to his astounding aerobatic skills, Rakhmanin is also an airline pilot.

Known for being soft spoken but determined, Rakhmanin speaks highly of the sport of aerobatics with a strong depth and courageous attitude. He is drawn to the competition of pilot vs. pilot making the sport a very personal challenge for him.

When his feet do touch the ground he straps on skis to hit the high slopes of Europe in the exciting sport of Alpine Skiing. His family is what he misses most during the Red Bull Race circuit. He uses every available chance to spend his off time with them.

Nigel Lamb makes his home in England when not flying all over the world to compete in and win many aerobatic championships. Lamb's impressive list of titles include British Unlimited Aerobatic Champion 8 times,

British Freestyle Champion 4 times, Masters of Aerobatics 1989 South Africa, Silver Medalist, Member of the British team, 3 World Aerobatic championships, 2 European championships, Marlboro Aerobatic Team Leader 1985 - 88 (Pitts Special / Extra 230), Toyota Aerobatic Team Leader 1989 - 93 (Pitts Special / Extra 300)

Golden Dreams Aerobatic Team Leader 1994 - 1999 (Pitts Special / Extra 300), Breitling Fighters Display Team

Manager/pilot 2000 - 03, Spitfire, Mustang, Kittyhawk, Corsair MK Airlines Captain (DC8 Freighters)

Military pilot Piston, helicopters and jets.

During their time in the MX hangar the four Red Bull pilots and their technical crews worked side by side, wing to wing, with some of their biggest and most intense competitors. Their manners, courteous nature and professional actions



Red Bull pilot Alejandro Maclean, left, discusses technical details with team technician/mechanic Jesus Canadilla before take off in his MXS airplane for a 'test and tune' flight session. Record photos Rebecca Triplett-Johnson



Red Bull pilot Sergey Rakhmanin goes over last minute preflight check in the cockpit of his MXS aircraft.

toward each other gave no hint of the fierce rivalries that will soon fill the skies around the air gate marked courses. Light hearted laughter, sharing of work space and meals and back pats and hand shakes were that of brothers and friends working toward the same goals. Fly safe and fly fast.

Both pilots and technicians worked on their individual engines and planes between each 'test and tune' flight. The boyish glow in each pilot's eyes as they climbed into the cockpits and closed the canopy around themselves told of souls who are indeed following their passions and living their dreams through flight while constantly putting safety and integrity first.

As they boldly put their power birds through gravity stealing ballets choreographed by cockpit control sticks and accompanied by the symphony of finely tuned motors, they continued their flights of passion while igniting excitement and amazement in many who watched the skies and thrilled to their own dreams past the horizons.

With all systems go and pre race work complete, the planes were partially disassembled and wrapped in protective plastic and cargo lockers for the long transport to Abu Dhabi where the birds will once again spread their wings and conquer the timed courses that await them.

The pilots and crews shared one last jovial and relaxed evening with MX employees and their families as the edge of competition crept closer upon the four separate teams. With good bye and good luck given with sincerity through the melody of accents from each of their beloved countries, the little boys who dreamed of the sky became the pilots who dream of the victory. When next they meet around the world the lines of competition will be firmly drawn but the brotherhood of flight will be forever in their hearts for one another.

As fans and aeronautics enthusiast all over the world look to the six host countries of the Red Bull Air Race World Championships for excitement and breathtaking feats, five of the world's best Red Bull pilots look to Wilkes County for the safety, speed and complex machines that will put them in the flight paths to victory.

MX Aircraft has excelled in designing and engineering some of the best airplanes on the market. Their work ethic and intricate knowledge of science and technology has put them in the fore front of aeronautical flight. Their continued kindness and positive input to Wilkes County is a winning combination for everyone.