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Purdue team places first among colleges, fourth overall in Air Race Classic

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. - Two aviation technology students from Purdue's College of Technology placed first among college teams and fourth overall in the annual Air Race Classic.

Katie Sparrow, a senior from Greeley, Colo., who is the captain of the Purdue Air Race Team, and co-pilot Marie Janus, a senior from Valparaiso, Ind., represented Purdue.

"We didn't have any difficulties with the weather or with the plane like some teams did, but you never know how you are going to do," Sparrow said. "When our plane was called in for an inspection on Saturday, we knew we were in the top 12.

"It's always an honor to place in the top five, and we're thrilled to have placed fourth overall and first once again in the collegiate division."

The Purdue Air Race Team was one of five collegiate teams among the 47 total teams. The team received \$1,500 for placing fourth overall and \$150 for placing first among the college teams.

In addition, Purdue's team received the Fastest Piper Award. The plane Sparrow and Janus flew is a 2000 model year Piper Warrior III.

Last year, Sparrow was co-pilot for the Purdue team that finished first in the collegiate division and third overall. She has been involved with the Air Race Classic since her freshman year. Sparrow, who will graduate in May, will serve as an adviser to next year's Purdue Air Race Team, and Janus will be the pilot.

In 1996, the Purdue team placed first overall, the first collegiate team to ever do so.

The awards were presented Sunday (June 24) at a ceremony in Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada.

This year's race began in Oklahoma City and continued to McCook, Neb.; Denison, Iowa; Jefferson City, Mo.; Bowling Green, Ky.; Lewisburg, W. Va.; Elmira, N.Y.; Burlington, Vt.; Bangor, Maine, before finishing in Saint John. The distance covered was about 2,573 miles.

Members of the Purdue Air Race Team ground crew were aviation technology majors Josh Stroka, Halley Oleck, Jennifer Thomas, Crystal Mathews, Pascal Nguyen, Joe McArdle and Erik Myrom, all juniors; sophomore Johanna Hawkins; and freshman Juliana Lindner.

Teams in the Air Race Classic win based on the efficiency and accuracy they exhibit in every aspect of the race. Teams are rated based on their performance compared to their airplane's handicap. Because of the nature of the scoring, it is impossible to gauge a team's performance in relation to other teams until the race has ended.

The Air Race Classic, which began in 1929, is the longest-running and only remaining women's air race.

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