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## **WMU aviators complete 2,500-mile air race**

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KALAMAZOO--Western Michigan University aviators Jennifer Jakubiec and Alison Pierce successfully completed the 2007 Air Race Classic, a 2,500-mile women's cross-country event that began June 19 in Oklahoma City and ended June 22 in St. John, New Brunswick.

WMU placed 12th out of 46 teams in the overall standings. Eleven of the 46 entries failed to complete the race, due primarily to severe storms along the final three legs of the race.

For the second straight year, WMU finished second to Purdue University for the Collegiate Challenge Trophy. The Purdue team of Marie Janus and Katie Sparrow was fourth in the overall standings. The third-place collegiate team from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University finished 28th overall. Three of the seven collegiate entries were among those that failed to complete the race.

In 2005, WMU aviators Erica Ebenhoeh and Sarah Tower won the Collegiate Challenge Trophy. In the five years the trophy has been awarded, Purdue has won three times. WMU and Ohio University have won once each. Among the collegiate entries in the race, WMU and Purdue have finished in the top two spots each of the past four years.

This year's 12th-place overall finish is fourth highest among WMU's eight entries in the Air Race Classic, dating back to 2000. The 2006 team of Courtney Hedlund and Leslie Treppa finished fourth overall, the best showing for a WMU team.

Originally from Walled Lake, Mich., Jakubiec is a WMU flight instructor and an April graduate of the College of Aviation. Pierce is from Burlington, Mich. She also is an April aviation graduate, who is now working on her flight instructor license. Both women were competing in their first Air Race Classic.

Women's air racing traces its origins to 1929 with the first Women's Air Derby, which was sponsored by the Ninety-Nines International Organization of Women Pilots. The Ninety-Nines was founded that year by 99 licensed women pilots, and famed aviator Amelia Earhart was the group's first president.

Racing continued through the 1930s and was renewed after World War II, when the All Women's Transcontinental Air Race, better known as the

Powder Puff Derby, came into being. The 30th and final Powder Puff Derby was held in 1977. The Air Race Classic stepped in to continue the tradition of transcontinental speed competition for women pilots and staged its first race in 1977.

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