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DEPARTS



# CIAF - China's International Air Sports Fiesta



What a fiesta! Featuring nearly 1000 pilots from all over the world, this has to be one of the premier air show venues

NIGEL HOPKINS

**T**HE Chinese government has invested a huge amount of money into aviation. This year the Aeroclub on Lake Xueye near the city of Laiwu in Shandong Province played host to the fiesta. Over 300 000 spectators plus a few hundred million TV viewers watched the three hour daily festival of air sports, featuring hot air balloons, powered paragliders, helicopters, model aircraft, skydiving, formation aerobatics, parachute accuracy landings and freestyle aerobatics. The skies were full.

The 2010 event saw the debut of Team Xtreme from South Africa. It was an international formation first for the high performance MX2 Aerobatic Aircraft. Nigel Hopkins and Mark Hensman, fresh from success in Europe, took to the skies in China three days before the start of the event.

Nigel's MX2 had been air-freighted from Europe and Mark's sea-freighted from Cape Town. The aircraft were assembled in the aeroclub hangars on the airfield with the assistance of Derek Hopkins, Bruce Saunders and Mark Sampson. The team was an instant hit with the crowds. The tremendous performance of the MX2 allowed the team to start the performance from take-off, as the crowd, elevated from the runway on the massive grandstands, watched the pair take off from opposite ends of the 800m long runway and meet

from take-off, as the crowd, elevated from

**Main Pic:** Nigel Hopkins wows the massive Chinese crowd in his new MX2  
**Right:** Mark Hensman (L) and Nigel Hopkins (R)  
**Below:** The Air Sports Fiesta featured all types of flying things, from balloons to aerobatics



halfway for the start of the opposing manoeuvres. The acceleration of the MX2 made this all very dramatic and also ensured minimal gaps in the display. The team then joined up for the formation part of the sequence and to the delight of the crowd finished off with a heart in the sky.

During the Fiesta a four minute freestyle aerobatic contest took place with Team Xtreme pilots finishing high in the standings.

- 1st Phillip Steinbach Germany
- 2nd Nigel Hopkins South Africa
- 3rd Castor Fantoba Spain
- 4th Zoltan Veres Hungary
- 5th Mark Hensman South Africa
- 6th Juan Verlade Spain
- 7th Daniel Ryfa Sweden

The planes were then disassembled and packed for shipping. They will travel 600km by road to Beijing and then by sea via Singapore to Cape Town. It is hoped that the two aircraft will make it to the season ending African Outdoor Group Ace of the Base Aerobatic contest in Vereeniging on the 5th of December.

that the two aircraft will make it to the

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