

Grinds – West Baden Springs hotel, Indiana, USA.



West Baden Hotel at French Lick, Indiana.

West Baden Springs Hotel

The Atrium of the West Baden Springs Hotel has been the site of numerous national and international indoor duration contests. The site hosted the 1980 F1D Indoor World Championships won by Erv Rodemsky and Team USA. Opened initially in 1855 it was burnt to the ground in 1901 and rebuilt in just a year with its current magnificent atrium and surrounding guest rooms. The Hotel site underwent a \$32m refurbishment and reopened as a full service luxury hotel in 2006. For the past four years, a two-day indoor contest has been held in the early spring. This contest continues to attract fliers from all over the United States. The fliers have usually included the top US F1D fliers including most, if not all, of the US F1D team.



The Atrium is a Category III site with a height of just over 29m to the central ceiling structure.

The dome girders are an additional 2m above the central structure (referred to as the “pancake” by the fliers). The dome is supported by the surrounding walls and columns which are 20m high. The atrium is a superb indoor flying site. Many national and World Records have been set there including the still standing Cat III F1 open record by eight-time World Champion Jim Richmond. Just this last March, Bill Gowen’s F1M exceeded the current F1M Cat III world record time.

Jim Richmond Open

It is customary to hold a contest before a world championship to allow competitors who are unfamiliar with the site to have an opportunity to get their models trimmed out and ready for competition. This year, the two-day contest was called the Jim Richmond Open, named after eight-time F1D World Champion Jim Richmond. It celebrated the 50th anniversary of Jim’s first Indoor World Championship, which he won in Rome in 1968.

On the first day of the Jim Richmond Open, conditions inside the building were turbulent. Models were riding updrafts one minute and downdrafts moments later. It was a frustrating experience for those trying to trim models. On a cold, overcast day, the normally calm, buoyant air inside becomes turbulent as cooler air drops in the centre of the building. It was far from the record-setting flying conditions that this site is capable of.

2018 F1D World Championships.

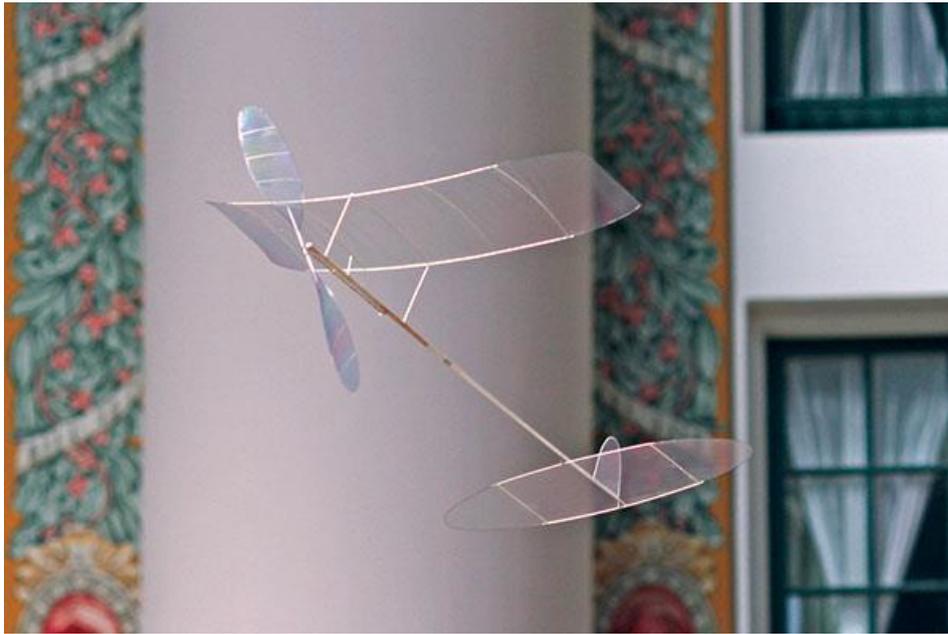
On March 19-22, 2018, the best F1D modellers from around the world gathered to compete. Forty-seven competitors (37 seniors and 10 juniors) representing 14 countries came to this small town in Indiana to compete in the 2018 FAI F1D World Championship for Indoor Model Aircraft.

During the contest the hotel is still a functioning luxury hotel, the atrium is divided down the centre for guests and flyers, but of course the models don’t understand this and many flights overfly the guests who might be having breakfast or morning coffee!



The unexpected snowstorm that arrived during the beginning of the competition made flying conditions difficult for the first few rounds. Photo by Nick Ray.

Brett Sanborn, from the US, went up for his fourth-round flight and put up an amazing 27:11 time. This was not only high time for the round, but would end up being the high time for the championship, a site record, an AMA National Record, and a new FAI World Record!



Brett Sanborn's aircraft logged a flight time of 27:11. It was the high time for the contest, flying site record, an AMA National Record, and a new FAI World Record! Photo by Jay Smith.

As these last flights landed, people began to gather around the large computer monitors at the processing table to see the individual results and team standings as the scores were entered into the scoring system. With only two rounds left and a great weather forecast, the last day would decide the contest.

Thursday (Rounds 5 and 6)

The morning test-flying session was busy. People showed up early to get ready for the final two rounds. It was sunny and clear outside and the temperature inside the atrium was slowly rising. It was going to be a good day.

Zoltan Sukosd of Hungary put in a 25:45, his best for the championship. Jake Palmer, who had bad luck in the first four rounds, put up a 22:36 (after a midair) to boost his individual placing and the US Team's score.

It came down to Round 6 to decide it all. The air was so good that high flight times started coming in fast. In fact, 14 of the top 15 contestants posted their best flights in Round 6. Corneliu Mangalea put in a 26:12; Mark Benns and his teammate, Tony Hebb, both put in flights of 25:04. Jake Palmer put in a 24:46, levying the US Team into first place.

Horatiu Somesan of Romania put in a 24:50, pushing the Romanian Team into second place slightly ahead of Great Britain. The final standings were coming down to the wire. While all of this was happening, Brett Sanborn put up another big flight of 27:01, only 10 seconds less than his time of the previous day. Brett now had the two highest flight times of the championship and was solidly in first place with a two-flight total of 54:12. All that was left was to see if anyone else could catch him. They didn't!!