

Airshow soars with help of past and present technology

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Past and present military technology will come together on Saturday, July 5 and Sunday, July 6 at the National Cherry Festival, with aerobatic maneuvers and demonstrations over West Grand Traverse Bay.

The Festival Airshow, presented by Northern Michigan Toyota Dealers, Netlink Business Solutions, National City Bank, High Point Golf Club, Kodiak Equipment, and Charter Digital Cable, will take to the skies at 1 p.m. both days.

The United States Air Force will showcase its A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft. The military has used this modern aircraft in its most recent deployment to the Middle East.

"This is a tactical demonstration of the A-10, which is very different from a show of formation techniques," said Steve Plamondon, the event director. He said the plane's maneuverability and striking force is awesome. The National Cherry Festival is pleased to be able to present the aircraft.

"Obviously we don't have a lot of military support this year, because they're pretty occupied," Plamondon explained.

The A-10 Thunderbolt is spe-

cially designed for close air support of ground forces. They are simple and effective twin-engine jet aircraft that can be used against all ground targets, including tanks and other armored vehicles. They have excellent maneuverability at low air speeds and altitude, and are highly accurate weapons-delivery platforms.

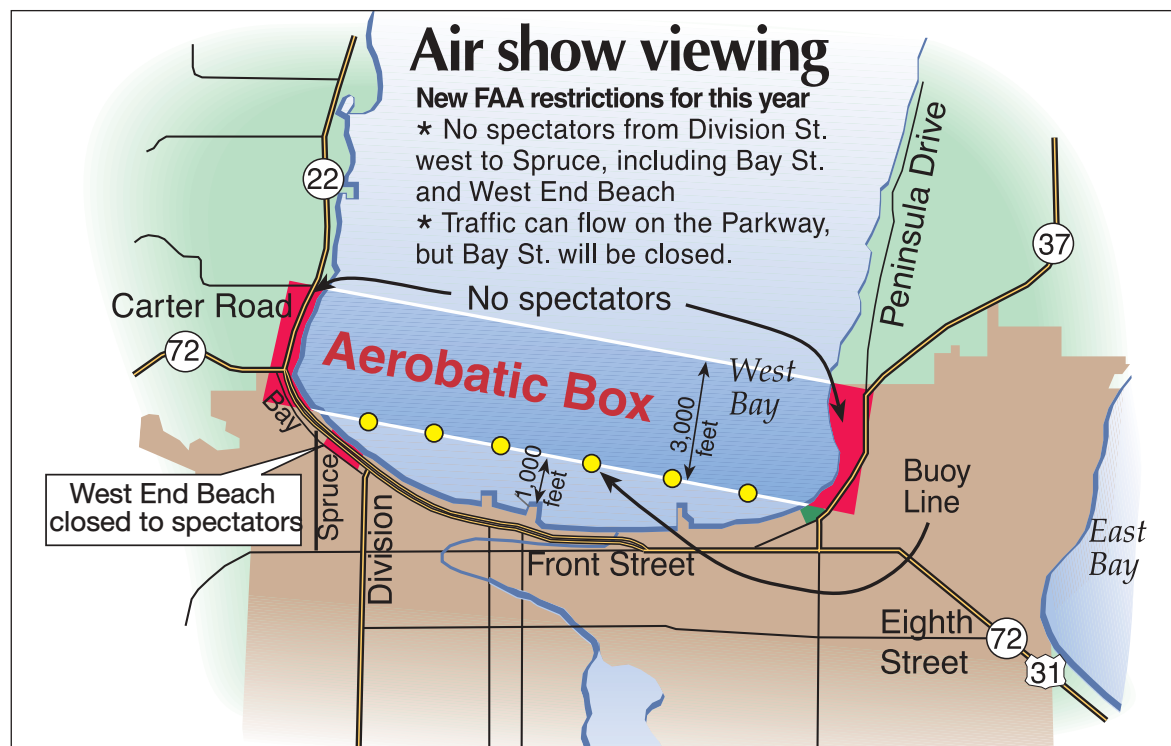
The A-10 will be flown over West Grand Traverse Bay by Captain Matthew Kouchoukos, a native of Illinois. The show will offer a combination of high and slow speed maneuvers, maximum performance climbs and descents, and simulated weapons deployment. The show will be a vivid demonstration of its wartime capabilities.

Plamondon also said that this year the airshow will feature a special Heritage flight, involving a P-51 Mustang, which will do both a solo routine, and one with the A-10.

"The Mustang is probably the most famous fighter from World War II," he said. "It's a tribute to the current and past fighters, and is quite a contrast."

The Red Baron Stearman planes are a National Cherry Festival staple, but this year their routine will altered, as it will be a performance with two planes instead of four.

"We thought it would be a



slightly different act; they do a few different maneuvers with two," Plamondon explained.

"They do more opposing, rather than formation stunts."

The duo is made up of smoke trailing, World War II-era, open cockpit biplanes performing aerobatic maneuvers. The National Cherry Festival is the only show site on the 25-stop tour where the Stearman Duo will perform open cockpit, upside down maneuvers over water. The Stearman planes

are Boeing biplanes, built between 1941 and 1943, though the biplane's original design dates back to the 1920's. Originally designed to be training planes to prepare U.S. Army and Navy pilots, the airplanes were used as crop dusters after the war.

The Red Baron air show planes have been modified to include fuel and oil systems that allow them to fly inverted and are equipped with engines that double the original power.

Few concessions, however, have been made to change the romantic character of the planes. The Stearman biplane is the most respected primary trainer in the military – more pilots have trained in a Stearman than in any other type of airplane.

No stranger to the Festival, Mike Goulian will perform his unlimited aerobatic maneuvers over West Grand Traverse Bay this year. Back by popular demand, Mike is one of North America's favorite performers. Festival attendees will gasp at the intensity of Mike's maneuvers as he performs high speed winding corkscrews, barrel rolls, and aerial wing-towing flips.

Complimenting the grace of Goulian is Chris Panzl and his Staudacher 300. Panzl, a member of the United States Aerobatic Team, will fill the sky with his award winning solo moves.

Furthermore, the United States Coast Guard will partner with the Festival to provide a helicopter search and rescue demonstration. Other military aircraft including the F-117 Stealth-fighter are expected to be on hand for the 77th National Cherry Festival as well.

Listen to the official airshow coverage on Sunny 101.4 WLDR.

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