Beat: Entertainment

Air Show Atlantic 2023

Warbirds Over Debert - Part 1

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USPA NEWS - For many who reside in Atlantic Canada, the summer is not complete without attending an annual Air Show. Since the early 80's, there have been many thrilling productions that keep spectators wanting more. The 2023 Air Show Atlantic Warbirds Over Debert certainly held true to the tradition and did not disappoint. Even though Mother Nauture caused some challenges, Air Show Atlantic made the necessary changes and was still able to produce breathtaking air displays to the delight of many enthusiastic fans.

The 2023 Air Show Atlantic Warbirds Over Debert was scheduled to be held on August 26th and 27th, which commenced with Media Day on Thursdsy, August 24th. Not opened to the general public, Media Day was an opportunity for Media professionals to have access to the performers and aircraft for the purpose of furthering their journalistic endeavors. There was even opportunity for Media to experience flights on various aircraft. Media Day was also opened to photographers who purchased the Shutterbug Package. Those photographers had unique opportunities to capture images of aircraft and performers arriving on site and preparing for their air displays that would follow.
Friday, August 25th, was originally scheduled to be Practice Day. Not opened to the general public, Practice Day once again would allow access to Media, and Shutterbugs ticket holders. However, due to a weather forecast predicting severe on Saturday, the decision was made cancel the Saturday event, pushing the August 26th performance ahead to Friday which would replace Practice Day.

On Friday August 25th, the gates opened at 1200 sharp and hundreds of enthusiastic fans converged on the Debert Airport ready to witness thrilling aerobatic displays of skill and excellence. Highlights would be performances by the beloved Canadian Forces Snowbirds, CF-18 Demo Team, and Canadian Forces Skyhawks along with civilian performers such as Third Strike Wingwalking, a Beechcraft C-45 Expeditor “Canadian Queen”, a P-40 Warhawk "American Dream", and a P-51 Mustang " Swamp Fox"(A complete list of performing aircraft can be found on Air Show Atlantic's website.)
Mother Nature did throw a curve ball by sending some thunder, lightning and rain which resulted in the flying to be suspended for a short time, but the show did resume when the weather settled.

The Sunday August 27th show went forward as scheduled, but unfortunately the Canadian Forces Snowbirds and the CF-18 Demo could not perform over Debert due to weather conditions at Halifax Stanfield Airport where these aircraft were based for the weekend. Even though the Snowbirds could not fly, the team were on hand to meet/greet fans and sign autographs. Many other fascinating aircraft where able to perform and were accepted with much enthusiasm by the excited fans.

On Friday, I spoke with Glen MacNeil, joined by his wife Roberta, son Jack, and daughter Elizabeth. The entire family, visiting from Yarmouth, were very excited to have been able to watch the aerobatic display by the Canadian Forces Snowbirds. He said, "After a summer of wild fires and flooding, we are so fortunate to be able to attend an air show. It is testament to the fact that Nova Scotia can overcome adversity and unite with other like minded fans to cheer on such a Canadian Icon as the Snowbirds that unite Canadians as a nation from the East Coast to the West."

I also spoke to Mike Johnson, his wife Linda, his son David and daughter Angela who travelled from Fredericton for Sunday's show. Although, they were disappointed that they did not get to see the Snowbirds or the CF-18 Demo perform, they were super excited about the aircraft that did perform. David said, " It was a privilege witnessing performances by many vintage aircraft that hold such significance within military and civilian aviation. The pilots displayed such skill, talent, vast knowledge, and quest for excellence in each display."

As previously mentioned, the Saturday, August 26th production had to be pushed ahead to Friday. The decision came at the last minute and as the result the Air Show Atlantic team had to scramble to get everything ready to accommodate the new schedule. I spoke to an Air Show Atlantic volunteer who asked me not to publish her name, but said, " The only way to pull off such a change at the last minute was for everyone involved to function with utmost team work and professionalism." She went on to say "One must have a passion for the work in order to succeed in an environment that demands such dedication and detail." She ended by saying, " If you love what you do, you will never have to work a day in your life and that is what keeps me coming back each year."

Despite a number of challenges, Air Show Atlantic rose to the occasion and produced a great weekend of exciting and thrilling aviation entertainment.

Editors Note:
Please join me over he next 4 weeks as I continue my series of articles on Air Show Atlantic 2023 Warbirds Over Debert, which will include my performer interviews and highlights from my exciting Media flight.

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