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## **Local skydive team, Arizona Airspeed, looks forward to upcoming World Championships**

Reported by  
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As they look forward to representing the US at the World Meet in 2008 in France next August, the nation's top-ranked skydive team, Arizona Airspeed, out of Eloy, is averaging as many as 20 practice jumps per day. The team completed a long and hard fought competition season last year with a sweep in all of the formation skydiving events.

Airspeed trained primarily for the four-way event during the season of 2007. Members Andy Delk, Craig Girard, Mark Kirkby, Eliana Rodriguez and current cameraman Steve Nowak completed the US Nationals as their sixth stop on the competition circuit and managed to go undefeated for the entire season.

Airspeed completed the US Nationals with a new record scoring average for the event with an average of 25.3 points.

The previous record of 241 had stood for years as the sport's unbreakable benchmark. Airspeed Arizona smashed the record last September with an overall score of 260.

Airspeed joined forces with past Airspeed members Dennis Rook and Brian Johnson along with founding members Dan BC and Jack Jefferies to compete in the eight-way event at the US Nationals. The team completed the ten round event with a competition average of 18.9. The team has decided to pass down the US eight-way team selection to Knight Trax (a team made up of Golden Knights and Fast Trax members) so they can focus solely on the four-way event in the upcoming World Meet. This will mark the seventh consecutive time that Airspeed will represent the US in the bi-annual World Meet competition.

Airspeed once again picked up former Airspeed members and other competitors at the US Nationals to take a victory in 16-way. This is the third straight year the team has been victorious in the 16-way event. Once again the Airspeed 16-way launch was proved to be successful.

Airspeed completed the 10-way event with current and past Airspeed members along with former four-way competitor Joey Jones with a come from behind victory to complete the sweep. Airspeed suffered a penalty in the first round to receive the maximum score of 40 but managed to fight their way back to a victory in the sixth round.

Airspeed looks forward to an exciting season in the four-way arena and hopes for continued success.

Team History

Arizona Airspeed began in 1994 when Jack Jefferies, Mark Kirkby, Kirk Verner, Dan BC and John Lemming (video) joined forces with Larry and Lil Hill of Skydive Arizona to start a new professional four-way skydiving team. The team went on to dominate the four-way event in every National and World skydiving competition for five years in a row.

What Airspeed started in 1994 has now become an ever evolving skydiving project, changing members from year to year but continuing the foundation of training and competing techniques developed by the original team. Airspeed is not only a competition team but it also works hard to share what is learned over thousands of jumps with the rest of the skydiving community.

In 1996, Airspeed teamed up with Arizona Vortex and expanded it's focus to attempt what no other team had ever accomplished; winning both the four-way and eight-way events at a World Meet. After losing the eight-way US Team slot to the Golden Knights by two points in 1996, only the four-way would go on to compete and win at the 1997 World Meet. Once again Airspeed would train for both the four-way and eight-way event in hopes of competing in both at the 1999 World Meet, this time Airspeed beat the Golden Knights by 9 points in eight-way winning both the four-way and eight-way U.S. Team slot for the 1999 World Meet. After a long battle Airspeed won the 8-way event and took second in 4-way. The team would try again at the 2001 World Meet having won both events at the 2000 Nationals, this time winning the four-way and taking second in 8-way.

During the 2002 US Nationals in Ottawa, IL, Airspeed came in second in the four-way event losing to the Golden Knights, but winning the eight-way event. This win named Airspeed as the US eight-way team who would compete in the 2003 World Meet in Gap, France. During this competition, Russia and the US battled through the meet, ending up being tied after 11 rounds. In the end Russia won this meet since they scored the most points in a single round.

The eight-way competition at the 2004 World Meet in Rejika, Croatia was another great battle. The meet would only go for 9 rounds due to the weather and the competition with the Russians and French was close. But the meet was called after 9 rounds and Airspeed won the eight-way event. Once again the Ottley Sword comes home!

In 2006, Arizona Airspeed went to Gera, Germany to defend its eight-way title at the World Meet. The competition was plagued by weather and only 6 of the schedule 10 rounds were completed. In the end, the French edged Airspeed by 4 points to take the title.



#### Photo Caption

Top-ranked skydive team Arizona Airspeed is training extremely hard for the upcoming World Meet in France next August, where they will once again be representing the United States. When not jumping from perfectly good airplanes at Skydive Arizona in Eloy, the team can often be spotted at Tri-Valley Fitness in Arizona City. From left, the members of Arizona Airspeed are Andy Delk, Mark Kirkby, Tri-Valley Fitness owner Ron Winnett, Eliana Rodriguez, cameraman Steve Nowak and Craig Girard.