



DEPARTURE

by Tom Atwood

Three-year-old Freestyle ACE!

Toddler Justin Chi, born on July 21, 2002, is one precocious RCer. He's been flying 3D for months and has shown off his skills at a number of events in the last year. We caught up with Benny Chi, Justin's father and a mechanical design engineer, to get the inside scoop on how Justin learned to fly RC at such a young age.

Benny notes, "A real benefit was that Sandra, his mother, was able to come to the field with us—he got first-hand exposure to RC airplanes before he could even speak or walk. He saw me flying and wanted to do it himself. At home, we left AeroFly Pro (RC flight simulator imported by Ikarus USA, since upgraded to AeroFly Pro Deluxe) up and running so that he could play with the transmitter at any time. Over a period of months, he realized that the throttle stick moves an airplane forward, probably because there is immediate feedback.

"He got to a point where he would push the power stick and the airplane would go up and then crash. This lasted for well over a month. He just got into it and did what he wanted. By the age of two he could manage simple controlled flights. He has done all of this on his own. Even now, I can't explain things to him—he has to figure it out himself. If I try to help with the sticks, he elbows me away!

"A real improvement came when he figured out how to sustain a knife edge with the use of rudder—initially, he'd roll it to knife edge and see it drop down and crash. That lasted for weeks. After he learned to use rudder, his learning accelerated. His first buddy box flying was with an Electric Hobbistar 60, in June of 2005. At the age of two years and eleven months, he took off, flew around and landed. Three months later, he soloed flying the E-flite Tensor 4D."

OUTSIDE ROLLING HARRIER CIRCLE

Justin, now almost 3 1/2 years old, is progressing so rapidly Benny knows Justin will soon have more nimble thumbs than his father. Justin's latest maneuver is an outside rolling harrier circle (rolling to the right while making a left turning circle in a high-alpha harrier attitude). On the sim, Justin can fly high-speed knife-edge circuits, high-alpha knife-edge, inverted flat spins, 4-point rolls, inverted circuits, harriers, inverted harriers, and hovers as well as rudder touches, but he is just beginning to demonstrate these at the field. He has experienced a few real-world crashes, is a bit nervous about them and is still dependent on the buddy box for



Justin, Benny and Sandra Chi at the 2005 NEAT Fair.

recovery from difficult situations.

Justin flies with control surfaces at full deflection and uses 60% expo for elevator and aileron, and 40% for rudder. Benny has empha-



sized the basics. "Earlier, in AeroFly, I limited him to a right takeoff and left landing approach pattern, with no flying over the pit area. This has helped him, hopefully, begin to develop a sense of safety.

"At his current age, the single most important thing for him is flying AeroFly Pro Deluxe and field flying. I am just going along with him because he loves it and we are hoping that he stays interested; we only want him doing stuff he loves."

What's it like being the father of an ace toddler? "We are very proud, of course, and I have had to accept the fact that his RC flying progress has to be 100% at his pace. At the flying field, people have asked me whether he gives flying lessons, saying he's a more capable pilot than they are. Yet as excited as we are at his accomplishments, there are no guarantees that his interest in RC will continue. I hope that the X-Box doesn't grab him!"

We are amazed by the awesome flying skills of young Justin Chi and wish him a wonderful future in our great hobby. Check out videos of Justin flying—you will never forget them.

Visit: www.rcgroups.com/forums/showthread.php?t=428085. 🌐

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