

## **William Tell Weapons Meet**

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Most people know of William Tell the Swiss archer, who was compelled by the evil prince to shoot at an apple placed on his sons head. Without going into the tale, Willy shot, split the apple, and secured his freedom, etc. In today's William Tell (WT) meet, we do much the same thing--act like sons throw apples, and knock heads. In fact, there is some pretty decent shooting, too, but the only thing similar to crossbows anymore might be some string taut nerves as the competition gets stiffer. William Tell is not new to change. Through the years, since 1954's first meet, there have been numerous arrays of new" commands entrants, locations, hardware, and tactics. Willy Tell began as an Air Force function. In fact, in 1954, the progenitor of WT was the U.S Air Force Fighter Gunnery and Weapons Meet. It was won by some sharp shooters from ATC. In 1955, several USAF teams from overseas showed up, making the weapons meet worldwide. The shoot-out went to the last day when ADCs Eastern Air Defense Force edged ATC to win the meet. The show got really big in 1956 Seven MAJCOMs competed flying F86s, F-89s, and F-94s. The Eastern Air Defense Force won it a second time as the competition again went into the final two days. The deciding factor was the rocket meet on one of Arizona's ranges.

Willy Tell's complexion began to change in 1958. The show moved to Tyndall. The first supersonic entrants competed (the F-102). The meet became an Air Defense Command operation. Radical new fire control systems and tactics began to evolve. Radio controlled drones zipped up and down ranges capable of electronic scoring. The meet was broken down into three categories. But the biggest first was the first perfect score. It was achieved by the Florida ANG flying F86s.

1959 brought a meet that marked the end of an era and the beginning of another. The old F-89 competed against brand new F-100s, F-102s, and the super-sophisticated F-104. The Century Series were airplanes that could bust the Mach in level flight, and one airplane flew a multi-mach. The new sophistication began to change airplane terminology and concepts: leading edge flaps, low aspect ratio, spikes, multi-stage burners. Five major commands competed in an all-weather, day and night environment. Targets moved through a multitude of speeds and altitudes. A realism began to dawn as the arena began to move away from the tactical into the strategic. Airplanes became more specified, i.e., fitted for a particular mission. There were no 'non-interceptors' in 1961 Interceptors were designed and produced in the form of the F-102, and the amazing new F-101 and F-106. Some of those same airframes may have seen competition in 1978. A few of those airplanes have outlasted some of the lieutenants that began

their careers in them.

A new side was initiated in 1963 when an unannounced intruder was launched in the form of a drone from an unknown location. Intercept directors had to find it, scramble, and shoot it down. The Air Guard was a full-time partner in the interceptor business by that time. Pennsylvania trounced the regulars in the F-102 category. The 318th won the F-106 division. The meet became international in 1965 when Canada entered in the F101 division. WT was now a worldwide meet with international competitors. There were 16 teams and a beautiful array of airplanes F-102s, F-101s, F104s, and F-106s. A USAFE team controlled by a Dutch team took home the marbles in the Deuce. The Southeast Asia conflict halted WT operations for five years between 1965 and 1970. In 1970 a miniature meet was held at Tyndall this time without the F-104. The Guard won two divisions: North Dakota in F-101s and Minnesota in F-102's. The 71st FIS from Malmstrom took F-106 honors.

Willy Tell expanded again in 1972. BQM-34A drones and EB-57 aircraft were added as targets. MATTS/BIDOP scoring and Data Link heralded the staggeringly accelerated electronic counter-measures/computer expansion in air combat. The Hooligans again won the F-101 trophy, and Wisconsin's 115th FIG won F-102 honors. The 460th FIS from Grand Forks took the F106 category, but a Canadian F-101 team took TOP GUN for scoring a direct hit on a maneuvering BQM-34A. WT 1974 added the Weapons Load Competition scores to the WT shooting/intercept scores. The loading comp was won by the 416th Chatham. An additional target, the TDU-25B was added. It was a towed target used for stern attack, infra-red missiles. The MAINEiacs took the F-101 glory. Boise won F-102 honors, and the BIG SKY won the F-106 category. In 1976 there was another series of changes. There were no more F-102 interceptors. The F-4 was added, with some teams on loan from TAC, USAFE, or PACAF units. Portland's BEAVERS took the F-101 trophy, and the BIG SKY boys pulled a duplicate win in the F-106. The 4th TFW from Seymour-Johnson won the F-4 comp. Willy Tell 1978 had eleven teams competing from CONUS, Europe, the Philippines, and Canada. The F-102 re-entered the competition as a target drone. The ACMI was used for several profiles. The BQM-34F was introduced as a high altitude, supersonic target. The 147th FIG TEXANS from the Houston ANG took home the Voodoo honors, the team from USAFE won the Phantom category, and ADCOM's 49th FIS from Griffiss edged out its F-106 competition to win that category. All in all, William Tell 78 continued the long tradition of being exciting, enjoyable, and an excellent proving ground for aerospace defense.