



CONQUEST OF THE SKIES

the famous Breitling Jet Team

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The authentic partner of aviation

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The early 1930s saw Breitling develop onboard chronographs intended for aircraft cockpits – instruments which became indispensable to pilots – and used by various armed forces including the Royal Air Force which used them in their World War II propeller-driven fighter planes. In 1952, the legendary Navitimer wrist chronograph, featuring a circular slide rule used to perform all navigation-related calculations, was launched. The Navitimer has been continuously manufactured for more than 60 years and is the world's oldest mechanical chronograph still in production today. As commercial aviation boomed during the 1950s and 1960s, Breitling continued to play a key role, as its onboard chronographs became standard equipment in many airplane manufacturers and airline companies.

The firm has shared all the finest moments in the conquest of the skies thanks to its sturdy, reliable and high-performance instruments. Today, Breitling remains dedicated to the world of aviation, cooperating with the world's elite pilots. It is associated with the greatest air shows on the planet, such as the famous Reno Air Races in the United States, and the ever-popular SAAF Museum Air Show here in South Africa. The

company also supports the restoration of legendary aircraft such as the Breitling Super Constellation – one of the last flight-worthy “Super Connies” in the world in efforts to preserve the legacy of aeronautics, to which its own history is so closely tied.

Breitling also partners with several exceptional teams which fly the company's colours including the famous Breitling Jet Team, the world's largest professional civilian flight team performing in jets. Each year, the Breitling Jet Team performs around fifty demonstrations delighting audiences throughout Europe at air shows, Formula 1 Grand Prix races and sports events.

Disciplined daredevils

The discipline of aerobatics dates back to the early days of aviation when daredevils like Americans Walter Brookins and Lincoln Beachey stunned audiences – Brookins with spiral dives and 90-degree banked turns and Beachey with his Death Dip or a low-flying sortie under telegraph wires. It was a dangerous occupation during a period when the aircraft were often not capable of keeping up with the wild enthusiasm of their pilots.

Today this demanding discipline is still one of the most fascinating sights to watch from the ground. It is a concentrated blend of technical ability, mastery and finesse and the Breitling Jet Team is the elite in its field. In 2003, when the opportunity arose to sponsor one of the world's top civilian aerobatics teams, Breitling immediately saw a synchronicity between both the company's and the team's core values. For both Breitling and the Breitling Jet Team, there is a necessary obsession with accuracy, high-performance, precision, reliability, and safety and the desire to actively promote the wonder of flight to the public.

The team has performed for awestruck audiences across the globe



for more than a decade. Each appearance of the Breitling Jet Team is a breathtaking vision as the aircraft gracefully weave through the sky at speeds of up to 750kph. A seamlessly coordinated ballet, the entire display leaves you spellbound as the pilots work in total synchronicity filling the sky with rolls, loops and gravity-defying moves. The rapid-fire succession of aerobatic figures are perfectly mastered and coordinated down to the smallest detail. The display ends with a dazzling pyrotechnic finale, using a system of thermal flares to light the sky.

The world's elite

The Breitling Jet Team operates on a full-time basis during the year, resulting in the highest safety and performance standards at every show. The skill and trust to operate their L-39C Albatros jets in tight formation – sometimes flying within just three meters of each other – stems from the many years of operating together as a close-knit team. Each Breitling Jet Team pilot is carefully selected and remains with the team for many years, unlike military or national teams which have to rotate their pilots every year. There have been relatively few changes to the team over the past ten years and the pilots think, operate and react as one cohesive unit. The safety of their team and the spectators below is their number one priority. Each of their displays is filmed and reviewed, as part of a detailed debrief, and gives each pilot the opportunity to assess their own and the overall team's performance. They don't take their success for granted and are always open to

advice. Collectively they strive for the ultimate perfection; a seamless precision display.

Maintaining peak physical and mental fitness is critical to the pilots who are often subjected to as much as 8G whilst in the cockpit and speeds of 750 kilometres per hour. The team engages in specific physical preparation on the ground in order to maintain G tolerance. The sudden acceleration felt in the dramatic manoeuvres, coupled with the intensity of the G forces means the pilots must be able to respond quickly and accurately in the air to ensure safety. Emotional stability is another prerequisite for the team members – who all rely on each other when on the ground and in the air.

While the life of a display pilot in the Breitling Jet Team can be both physically and mentally demanding, the pilots take great pleasure in every opportunity to fly and to showcase their unique performance to new audiences around the world.

Meet the team

Jacques "Speedy" Bothelin is the leader and manager of the Breitling Jet Team and is one of the world's most experienced aerobatics pilots, with more than 11,000 flight hours on 145 types of planes. He has performed approximately 2,800 demonstrations in 25 countries. As manager, he is responsible for the flight team's schedule and defining the show program. As its leader, he heads the formation, flying plane No. 1. Bothelin's favourite manoeuvre is the Loop and "B one" bend,

"I love arriving at the demo location, lining up the planes for the first loop and giving the signal for the smoke trails. It's something very exciting and despite the fact that we are in our aircraft, I can actually feel spectators' enthusiasm. It is very pleasant to be able to share the experience in this way."

Bernard "Charbo" Charbonnel is Bothelin's right inside wingman. As a fighter pilot specializing in ground attacks he mainly flew on Jaguar and subsequently Mirage 2000N aircraft. He shares a passion for old planes with teammate François "Ponpon" Ponsot and they jointly collect certain treasures from the past. He has 8,000 flight hours behind him and flies in plane No. 2. "Charbo's" favourite manoeuvre is the Ocean Master Wave. "For me, it is the most graphic figure and when there's not much wind, it's fantastic. When we reach the end of the figure, you can still see the start thanks to the smoke trail. Due to its nature and the time it takes, the execution of this manoeuvre must be extremely accurate. The space between each of the five planes must be identical in order to provide a symmetrical effect."

Prior to joining the Breitling Team, Christophe "Douky" Deketelaere was a fighter pilot on Jaguar and Alpha Jet aircraft within the French Air Force, where he was also an Alpha Jet instructor. He has notched up 6,000 flight hours and flies first slot in plane No. 3. Deketelaere favours the Synchro Pair Percussion manoeuvre, "Jacques and I perform this stunt, with me on the left and him on the right. I love arriving directly in front of spectators and remembering what I used to feel as a child when I was watching air shows."

François "Ponpon" Ponsot was a Mirage F1 and Mirage 2000 fighter pilot as well as a Mirage 2000 flight presenter at international air shows, and is passionately dedicated to vintage aviation. He devotes most of his leisure time to flying and restoring legendary planes like the Stampe, T6, Zlin and other warbirds. This left inside wingman has 6,700 flight hours to his credit and flies plane No. 4

"Ponpon" likes performing the team's Vertical Split which marks the end of the first half of their show. "To begin with, there are five of us flying in Rocket formation. I occupy the right outside wingman position. The figure starts with a loop and the plane accelerates during the descent. Jacques then gives us the order to split. It's technically very difficult, because you have to make sure all five planes follow the same split angles so as to ensure that the figure is visually beautiful. Georges-Eric "Georgio" Castaing fills the "second slot" position. He served for 23 years in the French Air Force, flying Fouga, Tucano, Alpha Jet, Mirage F1 and Mirage 2000 aircraft. He spent three seasons (2008-2010) with the Patrouille de France and has racked up 4,900 flight hours. "Georgio" flies plane No. 5.

Paco "Paco" Wallaert flew Tucano, Jaguar and Alpha Jet aircraft during his 22 years as a French Air Force fighter pilot. From 2009 to 2011, he was part of the Patrouille de France, subsequently serving a season as its technical coordinator. He is pursuing his career in the Breitling Jet Team as "right outside wingman" and has 4,400 flight hours under his belt. "Paco" flies plane No. 6

Patrick "Gaston" Marchand is the team's left outside wingman. He



Movement: Breitling Caliber 17, officially chronometer-certified by the COSC, self-winding, high-frequency (28,800 vph), 25 jewels, calendar

Case: black titanium

Crown: Screw-locked crown.

Bezel: Unidirectional ratcheted rotating bezel

Dial: Black with luminous Arabic numerals and hour markers. Chronograph hour counter at 3 o'clock, seconds at 9 o'clock, central chronograph seconds and minutes hands.

Crystal: Cambered sapphire crystal, glare-proofed on both sides

Water-resistance: to 300 m (1,000 ft/30 bars)

Strap: Military

Diameter: 48 mm

enjoyed a career as a fighter pilot on Jaguar and Alpha Jet planes and performed flight demonstrations over a five-year period, as part of a pair of Jaguars, the "Raffin Mikes" prior to joining the team. He has clocked up 5,500 flight hours and flies plane No. 7. "Gaston's" favourite manoeuvre is the Apache Roll, "First created by Jacques, it has since been picked up by many other aerobatics teams. This figure involves five planes. For spectators, it begins by looking to the right and finishes up on the far left. I fly the plane that performs barrel rolls around the other L-39s and from my pilot's seat I can observe the team from all angles.

Philippe "Sheriff" Laloix is the team's coach and stand-in pilot and has 9,000 flight hours to his credit. After a career as a fighter pilot

on Mirage F1 and Alpha Jet aircraft, he enjoyed five years with the Patrouille de France. In 1998, he joined Jacques Bothelin's team and flew four seasons on a PC-7, before switching to an L-39C. An acknowledged expert in formation aerobatics, he is both the Breitling Jet Team instructor and a pilot capable of replacing any of the other members within the team.

For "Sheriff" it's the Final Break manoeuvre which gives him the greatest thrill, "This is a figure performed by all seven planes, accompanied by smoke trails as well as flares – a kind of firework display enabling us to finish our show with a burst of panache. My role as a coach means I often view the demo from the ground in order to give my opinion on both technical and aesthetic levels, thus ensuring we keep the performance as picture-perfect as possible."

Luc Herbinière is the team's presenter and captain of the support aircraft. During the shows, he is on the ground to provide spectators with the technical information relating to the figures being performed, directing their gaze so that they miss none of the manoeuvres.

When the squad is travelling, he flies the Metro III support aircraft used for carrying technical and logistic equipment. The team would not be able to achieve their successes without the support of a highly skilled support team including the mechanics on which they rely with complete confidence who all make a rigorous, discreet and yet very direct contribution to the success and beauty of the show. ■ Lindsay Grubb

To learn more about Breitling watches visit www.breitling.com and for more on the Breitling Jet Team visit www.breitling-jet-team.com



POWER IN ACTION

Avenger Blackbird

With its imposing diameter, its light and sturdy case, its ultra-readable dial and its all-black look, the new Avenger Blackbird by Breitling vividly illustrates the watchword of the entire collection: power in action. Destined to be a companion on the most extreme missions, this newcomer to the Avenger line displays all the qualities of an instrument for professionals.

The generous 48 mm case features a slimmer and ever more ergonomic profile, extended by inward curving lugs. Wrist comfort is enhanced by the light feel of the titanium and a military-style fabric strap. The ultra-resistant carbon-based treatment reinforces the technical, powerful and sophisticated style, while eliminating any bothersome glare in the heat of action. The oversized hands and hour-markers ensure optimal legibility in all circumstances, including in the dark thanks to the luminescent coating that stands out clearly against the black background. The large screw-locked crown with non-slip grip guarantees maximum functionality, while its protective guards accentuate the robustness of the construction that is water-resistant to 300 meters (1,000 ft).

The new face of daring feats, the Avenger Blackbird by Breitling is powered by a self-winding movement chronometer-certified by the COSC – the highest official benchmark in terms of precision and reliability. ■



Photos: © Breitling