

BRILLIANT BELFAST BRAVES!

As we arrived at the hotel on Friday evening the sun was shining brightly, it was pleasantly warm without being stupidly hot and the forecast for the following day was rather more than encouraging. As we settled into our room the 'phone rang and the new voice of Bader Braves in the Province, Julie Kitt, was checking that we had arrived safely and updating plans for the following day; she had left no stone unturned and all was ready for a 09.30 start, all we had to do was be at The Ulster Flying Club in good time.

Saturday morning was just a welcoming and promised perfect flying conditions for the Braves; warm, good visibility and very little, if any, wind. By 08.45 everyone was set up and ready to go. Aircraft and pilots were prepared and briefed, ground crews all prepared and as always, tea, coffee and sticky buns were all being tested by the gathered throng awaiting the arrival of the first group of Braves. They didn't have too long to wait either for the clubhouse was soon buzzing with excited voices all wanting to know "is that my plane mister?" or "will we go through the clouds?"



Most of the flights today were being flown by just two pilots Jonny and Alex both looking far too young to be the experienced airline pilots they were!! (must be a sign of becoming one of the Bader Tribes elders!!). As the waiting Braves were exploring their goody-bags and trying their tee-shirts for size Julie called the first two Braves forward and escorted them out onto the apron and the awaiting Cessna 172s. Once safely strapped in the engines sparked into life and both aircraft taxied in line to the end of the runway. The first lined up and accelerated away picking up speed to the take off point and as it rose into the clear sunlight sky the second lined up and followed suit.



Tucked into the goody bags was a small glider kit provided by Julie and the club. Parents had been press-ganged into the world of aircraft assembly as they carefully followed the construction guide on the glider packets until they were proudly examining their efforts before handing over the finished product to be well and truly tested by the Braves; some performed better than others, some glider pilots quickly found the gliding knack whilst others took a

little longer. Before long most of the clubhouse and all of the lawn outside were under attack from Bader Braves Battle Squadron!!

The morning progressed well to plan with Braves, like the aeroplanes, coming and going with amazing regularity. Late morning and when the word went out that the BBQ was now open there was a mass exodus to grab a seemingly endless supply of hot-dogs and burgers each available with or without onions!! Wow, what a treat!! (I must admit that whilst Jess was busy checking the next group of Braves in as they arrived I skipped around to the side of the building where I would be well out of her site for an extra juicy banger AND a burger!!!!).



We were now into the early afternoon and whilst our pilots took a quick break another of the club volunteers, Adam, stepped into relieve them taking one of the flights in his lunch break



from his work; he only just landed in time to jump back into his car and get back to the office!!! The Cessnas continued their work heading out over Strangford Lough, the waters of which sparkled like jewels in the sun today, before turning to complete their journey to the southern end and then returning up the peninsular passing over the lovely estate at Mount Stewart to home base. By late afternoon the last of the Braves had been flown and our stalwart pilots of the day

were busy finalising logs, refuelling and preparing the aircraft for their next assignment at the end of “Operation Bader”.

Everything had now been cleared and The Ulster Flying Club was returning to some semblance of normality following what had been a wonderfully successful Young Aviators Day. Time now for another cuppa and de-brief before we made our own final farewells but not before discussing a possible return (we’ve had more comebacks than Sinatra!!!) in 2019; thankfully Julie, Davy and team UFC have given early indications that all will be well – let’s hope so for this has been a superb day. It always seems that a “thankyou” is scant reward for so much hard work but right now there is little more that can be said so on behalf of all the Braves –



THANKYOU

UFC!