

Air Race Classic making 1st Spencer appearance

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By James Tillison, Daily Reporter Staff



The 41st annual Air Race Classic, an all-women transcontinental airplane race, will be coming to Spencer this summer. The course begins in Frederick, Maryland on June 20 and ends in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on June 23. “Spencer is about the halfway point, so there will probably be quite a few planes coming through the second or third nights,” Theresa White, of the Air Race Classic Inc., said. (Photo submitted)

Spencer will act as one of eight stops along the route of the 41st annual Air Race Classic, an all-women transcontinental airplane race that traces its roots to the 1929 Women’s Air Derby. The race is open to any female pilot over the age of 17 and a range of planes are allowed to compete as it will be a handicapped race.



“I’m not familiar with any other race like this. It is a handicapped race of different aircraft and women pilots. Each plane will have to beat its own handicap giving them an equal chance,” Gayle Brandt, Leading Edge Aviation Spencer Airport manager, said.

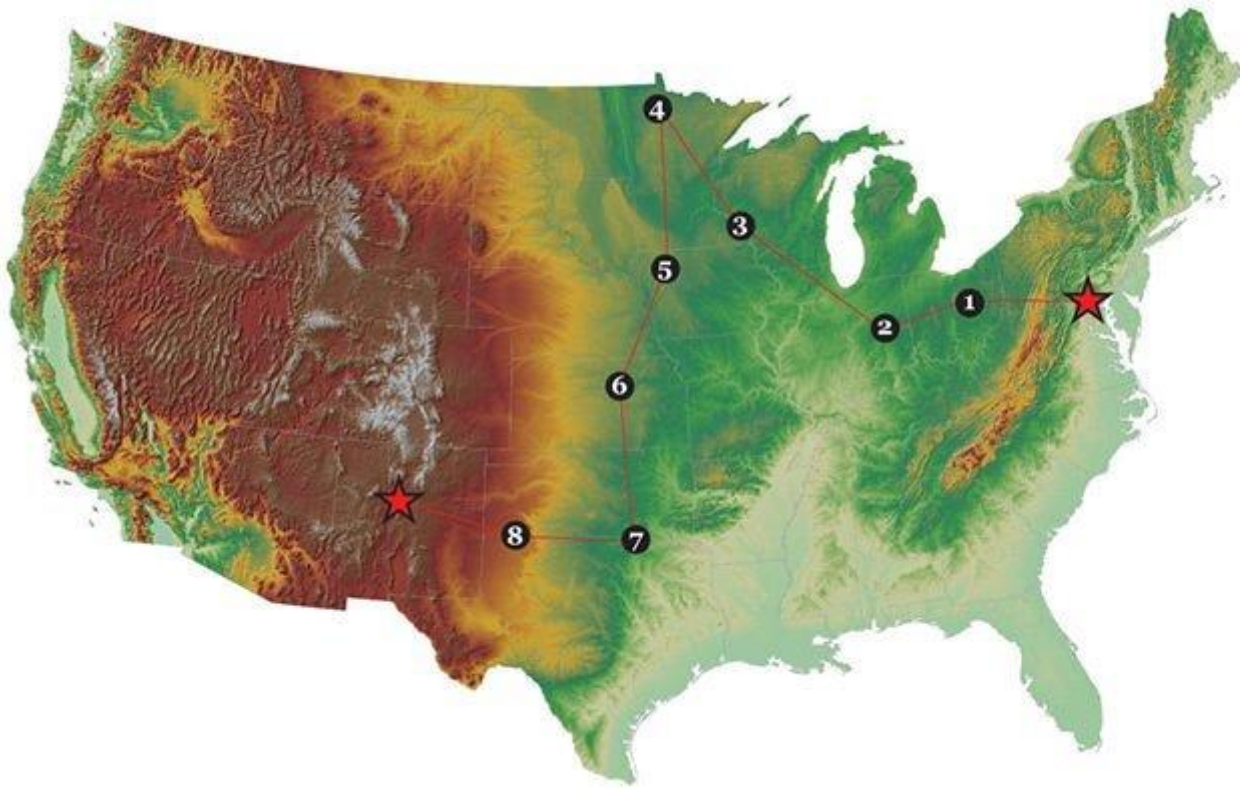
The course will begin in Frederick, Maryland on June 20 and end in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on June 23. Along the way, pilots must mark off each check point by doing a fly by at each of the eight stops. The eight stops include Coshocton, Ohio; Indianapolis, Indiana; Decorah, Iowa; Bemidji, Minnesota; Spencer; Abilene, Kansas; Ardmore, Oklahoma; and Plainview, Texas.

When each team reaches Santa Fe, a group of scorers will calculate the times and determine the winners. Director of route division for Air Race Classic Inc., Theresa White, said timers will be waiting for the teams at the airports in each of the host cities.

“When they come in, they will do a flyby of the airport and the trackers in the plane will stop their times. When they take off again, they will do another flyby to start their trackers again,” White explained.

While each airport welcomes the planes of varying models and sizes to stop for the race, White warns that it is difficult to predict how many will stop at each location. Some of the pilots may stop only for fuel and continue to go and others may stop at some locations for the night.

“There could be up to 50 planes in one day, or just 20 coming through. The different types of planes will play a factor, so they could be coming at any point over the four days,” White explained.



The eight stops on the Air Race Classic route include Coshocton, Ohio; Indianapolis, Indiana; Decorah, Iowa; Bemidji, Minnesota; Spencer; Abilene, Kansas; Ardmore, Oklahoma; and Plainview, Texas. (graphic submitted)

Though she said the race is not particularly a spectator sport, she does mention that the flybys are a good opportunity for community members to watch the pilots in action. White also encouraged those who are interested to follow the race on the real-time tracking map at airraceclassic.org.

“Spencer is about the halfway point, so there will probably be quite a few planes coming through the second or third nights,” White said.

Spencer was chosen as a stop along the course for having an airport that meets the race criteria and an application that was submitted by Brandt.

“I made my request for Spencer to be a stop a while back. It has been about a two-year process,” Brandt explained.

In addition, Spencer was recommended by Air Race Classic board of director’s member Minnetta Gardinier, of Iowa City. Brandt said she wants Spencer to be a spectacular stop along the route for the pilots and to showcase the community.

“We are forming a committee now to plan for the event. We want to share our hospitality for those who might be overnighing,” Brandt said.