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There's really no need to set a speed record for touching down at all hard-surface public-use airports in Wisconsin, but that didn't stop Matt McDaniel and Bruce Kaufman from trying it. Actually, there was a need: the pilots were racing the clock to support a good cause. They flew the one-day adventure in a Cirrus SR22 as a fund-raiser for the kids of the neurosurgery unit at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, where Kaufman is chief of pediatric neurosurgery. At the end of the day they raised \$12,000 for the cause, and for their trouble, they were ensured a place in the record book.

While last summer's entire flight took nearly 17 hours, which included 104 takeoffs and landings, the trip was made easier by planning, preparation, and solid execution. They started two years ago by determining the best route for the effort. The goal was to find the shortest line between all 104 airports, starting at Milwaukee-Timmerman.

McDaniel says flight-planning software was key to finding the shortest routes, taking into account the number of statewide unlighted airports that would require arrival during daylight hours. There were also issues going into military and private fields—and with their fuel stops and alternates. Next came efforts to coordinate the flight with both air traffic control and flight service. They ended up getting a dedicated call sign for the day and a squawk code, and with that, permission to get quickly into and out of airspace, which helped immensely.

To smooth the flight, and to speed up pit stops, the pilots had two other support airplanes follow along. Those pilots were sent ahead to check weather and expedite fuel stops. While McDaniel and Kaufman were "doing pilot stuff" during stops, or opening flight plans, or making PR calls, the support crew fueled the airplanes, cleaned the windscreens, down-loaded the flight-tracking GPS that the

NAA required, and did other vital support tasks.

When all was said and done, the flight's ending time was 16 hours, 42 minutes, 14 seconds, for the record. They ended up flying more than 2,430 miles, or roughly Milwaukee to Phoenix. "Except it was all in one state, with a lot of turns and speed changes," McDaniel says.

That first leg of the flight turned out to be the hardest, because in the early-morning hours they tackled the southeastern part of the state, the busiest from an air traffic point of view. Having several airports in close proximity was an early advantage because they weren't fatigued yet, but they were burdened by early-morning ground fog. In fact, they had to move the first fuel stop. While they were able to make a touch-and-go at that airport, they felt it was better to stop at a later airport.

That they were able to shift plans en-route indicated the level of preparation



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Bruce Kaufman, MD (left)
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they put into the flight. McDaniel and Kaufman studied the *SR22 Pilot Operating Handbook* to crunch numbers, ensuring that their airports were appropriate. In particular, they wanted to make sure that the odd-lot airports in the state—for example, Crivitz, which was the state's shortest runway at only 2,155 feet—would work under anticipated wind conditions, so they were prepared to make a final go/no-go call.

Their big issue was time. To expedite arrivals and departures, they explored whether it was ever appropriate to land downwind. From a time-management point of view, it would allow them to do a straight-in approach and a straight-out departure, rather than get into the traffic pattern twice, which would shave off several minutes at an airport. "Multiply that by 104 airports, and all of a sudden, you're talking about a lot of time," McDaniel says.

But there was the safety issue, so the pilots performed test flights to measure

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their true ground rolls and takeoff distances with a couple of knots tailwind. On reasonable runways, they would have a margin of about 5 knots. In the end, they were fortunate to have tame winds all day long. Those test flights also validated their expected fuel burns.

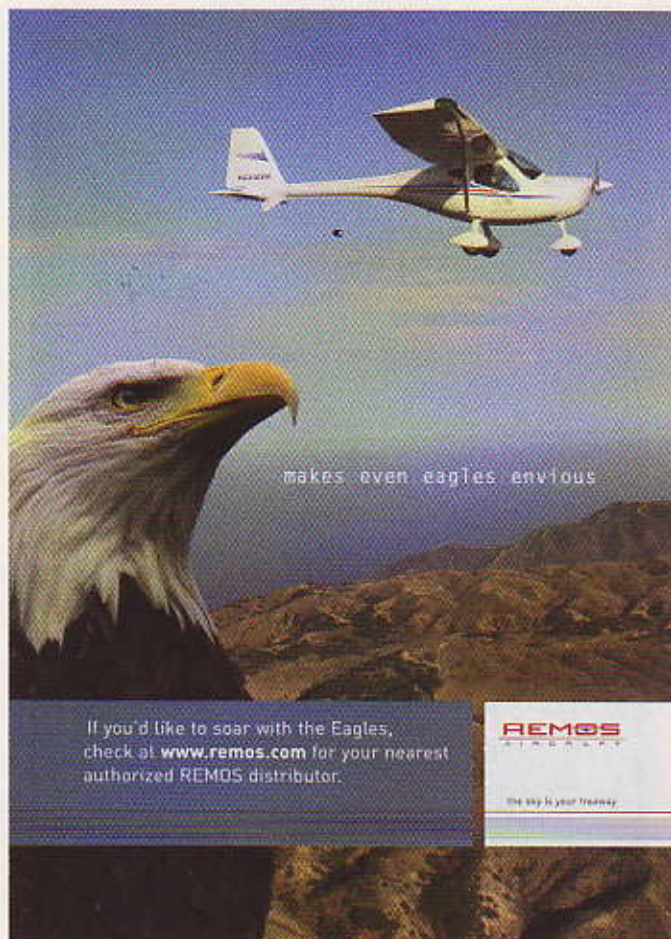
"In the end, we never scared ourselves, because we planned ahead," McDaniel says.

Still, the attempt was tremendously more work than they thought it would be, both from the flight-planning aspect

and definitely from the publicity and fund-raising aspect. "The record was really part of a grander plan to garner more publicity for the flight. We wanted the publicity to drive up the fund-raising side of it," he says. "Given the right cause, we'd do it again, but we certainly wouldn't do it again tomorrow."

Of course, being a record holder has a cache, whether it's done in a powered parachute, a homebuilt, or a production aircraft. When it comes to amateur pilots, it's more about personal gain than fame and fortune, and that gain can come in shapes other than a piece of paper, whether it's the sense of accomplishment, the sense of a job well done, or hard work for a good cause.

"To be quite honest, the feeling that we were able to raise more than \$12,000 for the kids makes me feel better than knowing I have a record," McDaniel says. "At the end of the day, though, we're both proud to be part of the whole thing."



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