



CHAIRMAN'S AWARD

RUTH SANDERS

PC: ANTHONY TAYLOR

AIR RACING'S GREAT-GRANDE DAME

Written by Ben Marsh



PC: HARRY GANN

Not since Lady Houston's sponsorship of Supermarine to compete for and win the 1931 Schneider Trophy has a woman done as much to support air racing as Ruth Sanders. Hailing from Sanders Aeronautics in Lone, California, Ruth is matriarch to three generations of air racing champions: her late husband Frank, son and defending unlimited national champion Dennis and grandson-in-law Joel Swager, Reno's 2018 unlimited champion.

In her half-century-long association with air racing, Ruth and her family race with two credos: "To win, you must first finish" and "Don't lose money racing." These are tall orders in a sport where a racing airplane can cost well over a million dollars. Ruth and her family have a competitive advantage: they restore Hawker Sea Furies and other vintage aircraft for a living. Sanders has the resources to create high speed results.

In 1971, the Sanders family participated in two endurance races with the venerable Sea Fury 232. Frank placed second at the 1,000 mile event at Brown Field, winning the 1,000 kilometer race at Mojave later that year. Thirty-five years later, Sanders Aeronautics rebuilt and modified the 232 for Mike Brown, who claimed Reno's 2006 unlimited national championship in September Fury, still with race number 232.

The top contender in Ruth's racing dynasty is Race 8, Dreadnought. The Sanders family, with help from friends, restored and modified this Hawker Sea Fury for racing between the 1982 and '83 Reno events. Dreadnought dominated the unlimited class for several years thereafter with national championship victories in '83 and '86. The Sanders are always competitive with Dreadnought, winning second place finishes so often that it is one of the few profitable unlimited racing ventures. Dreadnought's winning streak returned with national championships in 2018 and 2019. Behind every triumph and challenge, you will find Ruth humbly guiding her family business and air racing team.

The Reno Air Racing Association is proud to acknowledge Ruth Sanders with the Chairman's Award for her 50 years of support of air racing. Ruth maintains her active role in the family business with her son Dennis, granddaughter Shannon, grandson-in-law Joel and a staff of dedicated and talented craftsmen at Sanders Aeronautics. She is also great-grandmother to four children, making Ruth Sanders the Great-Grande Dame of Air Racing.