IN WITH A PEEP, OUT WITH A ROAR

FOUR CAL POLY SOPHOMORES TASTE SWEET VICTORY AT THE RED BULL FLUGTAG

BY MATT LAZIER

TAKING THE STAGE IN LONG BEACH, THE LADIES FOUND THEMSELVES THE CENTER OF ATTENTION FOR A CROWD OF MORE THAN 105,000.

TO THE LIST OF GRACEFUL AND AERODYNAMIC birds of the world, we may now add the pEEP – thanks to four Cal Poly sophomores.

That’s right, the pEEP – the little yellow marshmallow chicks you see in stores around Easter. Only this particular pEEP wasn’t little – nearly 400 pounds, with a 24-foot wingspan. And it was made of styrofoam, PVC and aluminum.

Oh, and far from a flightless marshmallowfowl, this pEEP soared 98 feet to defeat more than 30 competitors at the 2010 Red Bull Flugtag in Long Beach in August.

Nevermind the victory, just taking part in the Flugtag (or “flying day”), fulfilled a dream for math student Corinne Sch-

nieders. “I saw a commercial for it three years ago,” she said, “and I thought ‘I need to do that.’”

In the event, teams build flamboyantly themed, human-powered flying machines, then push them off a pier and try to pilot them over the water. Teams are judged on how far they go and on their costumes and skits or dance routines done before “liftoff” (which for many teams and their contraptions simply involves plunging straight into the water).

Red Bull holds Flugtags worldwide. When Schnieders saw in May that there would be one in Southern California (where she and her team members are from), she rounded up fellow Trinity Hall residents Jyllian Smith (a friend from high school), Jamee Currans and Katie Morrow, along with high school friend and UCLA student Suzy Strutner.

After gaining entry into the contest (only 34 teams were picked out of more than 380), the Cal Poly crew spent the summer refining and building their contraption – something like a biplane with a pEEP-shaped base.

Taking the stage in Long Beach, the ladies found themselves the center of attention for a crowd of more than 105,000.

“It was surreal. You’d look out, and you couldn’t see the ground, there were so many people” Morrow said. “There was a moment where I thought ‘I cannot do this.’”

But with Schnieders behind the wheel, the other four members gave a running push, and the pEEPcraft floated gently across the water and in the Red Bull history books.

“We could feel it. It wasn’t just falling. I could feel the air gliding under me,” Schnieders said. “It was such a cool feeling,”

Perhaps the most surprising element of the victory: None of the students studies engineering (though Schnieders loves flying, wants to switch to mechanical engineering and aspires to be an astronaut). Currans is an art student, Morrow is majoring in social science, and Smith studies graphic communication.

For additional photos and information on Cal Poly’s flugtag-winning team, check out the online edition of Cal Poly Magazine at www.magazine.calpoly.edu.

CAL POLY MAGAZINE 23