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Air Combat over Eastern Iowa



The University of Iowa's Operator Performance Laboratory's L-29 jets fly a mission over Iowa City Saturday, Feb. 11, 2012 (Brian Ray/The Gazette-KCRG)

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Last Saturday KCRG's Matt Nelson, Mark Carlson, and myself had the opportunity to work on an awesome story about some high tech research being conducted by the University Of Iowa's Operator Performance Laboratory (OPL) in conjunction with Rockwell Collins. Due to insurance reasons we were told by both the OPL and by our insurer that we would not be allowed to actually fly in the jets. So in order to capture the story we decided to rely on small GoPro HD cameras.

Tom "Mach" Schnell with the OPL was totally supportive of this idea and wanted to meet with us about what we were thinking and our goals for the story. So early last Wednesday morning we met with Schnell in the OPL's hangar at the Iowa City Airport. In our discussion with Schnell I proposed the idea of putting a camera out on the wing of one of the jets. I was not sure how this would go over because

it would require actually drilling a hole in the tip of one of the wings in order to safely bolt the mounting point for the camera to the plane. Not only was Schnell supportive of the idea he was so excited about it that later that afternoon we received a series of photos from him taken on a test flight after he and his team had custom built the mount.

Saturday, when we arrived we rigged up the two jets with seven GoPro HD cameras. Each jet had a camera facing the pilot and one out the front of the canopy. The jet with the simulator pilot also had a camera on him and one on the wing tip. The other contained the camera for the side shot. To see the results of all this effort and find out what the OPL is up to tune in to KCRG's newscast at 10 p.m. Thursday night and read Sunday's Gazette. But for a taste and what we captured see the web video below. Enjoy!



Tom "Mach" Schnell was a huge help to this project. He went as far as creating a permanent wing mount on one of the L-29s so we could safely mount a GoPro HD2 outside the plane on the wing. I never dreamed when I suggested to him we do this during a meeting a couple days before the shoot he would be so helpful. (Mark Carlson/The Gazette-KCRG)

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Brian Ray and Matt Nelson discuss mounting points for the GoPros in one of the UI OPL's two L-29 Jets (Mark Carlson/The Gazette-KCRG)

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Brian Ray and Matt Nelson line up the GoPro HD2 facing out the side of the canopy of one of the OPL's L-29 jets to get shots of the other plane flying in formation (Mark Carlson/The Gazette-KCRG)

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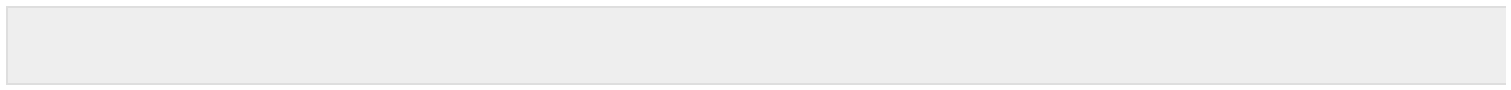


The front and rear facing camera in one of the OPL's L-29 jets.
(Mark Carlson/The Gazette-KCRG)

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