

The Discovery Air Hawk One poses for the camera in June 2012. The jet had been restored to mark the centennial of Canadian powered flight in 2009 but the programme was such a success that the aircraft remains an integral part of the Canadian airshow circuit to this day. Doug Fisher



# Hawk One

## Return of the Golden Sabre

Formed in 1959 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of powered flight in Canada, the Golden Hawks lasted just five seasons. In 2009 a Sabre returned to the skies in the Golden Hawks' characteristic scheme to mark the centennial of Canadian powered flight. One of its pilots **Dan Dempsey**, explains how it all happened.

The F-86 Sabre fighter enjoyed a remarkable career with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and to this day still carries a special mystique about it. The only flying example of its kind in Canada is owned and operated by Vintage Wings of Canada, an organisation dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Canada's rich aviation heritage.

In 2009 the Sabre toured across Canada as the mainstay of the Centennial Heritage Flight celebrating 100 years of powered flight in Canada. Due to popular demand and a unique partnership between Vintage Wings

of Canada, title sponsor Discovery Air and the Department of National Defence, along with private sector donations, Hawk One has continued to tour Canada every year since.

### Canadair's Sabres

Built under license from North American, all Canadian Sabres were built by Canadair Ltd at its Cartierville, Quebec plant near Montreal. Modeled after North American's F-86A, the prototype Canadair Sabre 1 (19101) made its first test flight at RCAF Station Dorval on August 8, 1950, piloted by Canadair's chief test pilot, Al Lilly. Two days later he became the first

person in Canada to break the sound barrier.

Original production models of the Sabre were thereafter designated the Canadair CL-13 Sabre 2 and closely matched the North American F-86E-1 in design and performance. The first Sabre 2 (19102) made its maiden flight on January 31, 1951. By August 1952, Canadair had built 350 Sabre 2s for the RCAF.

Ultimately, Canadair built six variants of the Sabre, the most famous and capable being the CL-13B Sabre 6. Powered by the Canadian-built Orenda 14 engine which produced 7,275lb thrust, the aircraft had a top speed of almost 620kts and a service ceiling of 55,000ft. The first



Three RCAF veterans whose names adorn the fuselage of Hawk One - Johnny Blache, Fern Villeneuve and Bill Briggs.  
Peter Handley via Dan Dempsey



Canadair Sabre 23314 - the modern day 'Hawk One' - is seen in RCAF service wearing its early-1960s era bare metal markings.  
DND/RCAF Photo via Dan Dempsey



Sabre 23314 at CFB Shearwater during Centennial Year in 1967.  
Barrie MacLeod via Dan Dempsey

Sabre 6 bore the serial number 23371 and took to the skies on October 19, 1954. When the last Sabre (23752) rolled off the assembly line at Canadair on October 9, 1958, the company had manufactured a total of 1,815 airframes, including 655 Sabre 6s.

### RCAF Service

Chosen by the RCAF as its frontline fighter in August 1949, the Canadair Sabre served in Western Europe as a deterrent to the Warsaw Pact from the early days of the Cold War until it was replaced by the CF-104

Starfighter in 1962. All told, some 300 RCAF Sabres were based in Europe at the height of the fighter's operational service as part of Canada's collective defence contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Spread throughout twelve Squadrons on four Wings, the aircraft saw service in England, France and Germany in the interceptor day fighter role. Canadian Sabres served at RAF North Luffenham, England as well as RCAF stations at Marville and Grostenquin in France and Zweibrücken, Lahr and Baden-Soellingen in West Germany between 1951 and 1963.

A total of 107 RCAF Sabre pilots gave their lives in service of their country and the NATO Alliance during this period.

The RCAF took delivery of 1,183 Sabres in four variants over the course of its operational service but in 1956 four of the Sabre squadrons in Europe were disbanded to give way to the Avro CF-100 All-Weather Interceptor. Ultimately, all of Canada's European fighters were replaced by the CF-104 Starfighter as the RCAF switched its NATO role to low level nuclear strike and reconnaissance.

When the Sabre was phased out of service in



441 (F) Sqn RCAF pilot Don Syms took this candid photo of squadron technicians on the flightline at Rabat, Morocco preparing Sabre 23314 (right) for another air-to-air gunnery sortie circa 1955.

Don Syms via Dan Dempsey



Fifty years ago this past summer these 1962 Golden Hawk pilots were strutting their stuff across North America. L to R – Ft Lt Jack Frazer, Ft Lt Norm Garriock, Ft Lt Ed McKeogh, Sqn Ldr Lloyd Hubbard (Team Leader), Ft Lt Alf McDonald, Ft Lt B.R. Campbell and Ft Lt George Miller. RCAF Photo via Dan Dempsey



The Golden Hawks brought great fame to the RCAF from March 1, 1959 until their sudden disbandment on February 7, 1964. The team's seven-ship formation is seen here in 1963. RCAF

Europe in 1963, it continued to serve as a lead-in fighter trainer for the CF-104. The training unit was renamed the Sabre Transition Unit (STU) and the last Sabre training flight took place in December 1968 at CFB Chatham, New Brunswick.

### Sabre on Display

For a brief period in 1954, 431 (F) Sqn based in Bagotville, Quebec was equipped with the Canadair Sabre 2 and participated in Operation Prairie Pacific, a programme designed to introduce Canadians to the jet age through a series of dynamic airshows across Canada. Although disbanded in October 1954, the squadron was re-formed on April 1 1978, when the Canadian Forces Snowbirds received squadron status, being officially renamed 431 Air Demonstration Squadron.

The seed for a dedicated display team had been planted during Operation Prairie Pacific and five years later, in 1959, RCAF Station Chatham became home to the RCAF Golden Hawks.

### Golden Hawks

The Golden Hawks were formed on March 1, 1959 as the RCAF's contribution to the Golden Anniversary of Flight in Canada. Under the command of Wing Commander Jake Easton, Squadron Leader Fern Villeneuve and his team flourished, quickly establishing themselves as one of the finest aerobatic teams in the world. The Hawks' six Sabre 5 jets were resplendent in their gold schemes and represented everything that was glorious about the RCAF and aviation in Canada.

**“The RCAF took delivery of 1,183 Sabres in four variants”**

Although originally slated to fly for only one year, the popularity of the Golden Hawks ensured their survival for five full seasons, until debilitating budget cuts to national defence sealed their fate on February 7, 1964 as the team practiced for their sixth season, now using seven Sabre 6s.

All told, over 15,000,000 North Americans watched the Golden Hawks weave their aerial magic in 317 shows over five years. They came to symbolise a form of national pride, a thrilling sight millions of Canadians would cherish and never forget. Today, their legacy lives on through the Snowbirds... and Hawk One.



Although long disbanded, the Golden Hawks' legacy lives on with the Snowbirds and Hawk One. RCAF

### Going for Gold

The F-86 Sabre that formed the backbone of the 2009 Centennial Heritage Flight is a Canadair Sabre 5 that originally bore the RCAF serial number 23314. Manufactured in 1954, it was the 1,104th Sabre to come off the Canadair assembly line. In later life it was retrofitted with wings equipped with leading edge slats and an Orenda 14 engine, thus bearing all the resemblance, and performance, of a Sabre 6. Purchased by Vintage Wings of Canada in September 2007, it was refurbished in the colours of the Golden Hawks – hence the moniker, 'Hawk One.'

Although 23314 was never painted in Golden Hawk colours, it was assigned to the team at RCAF Trenton for the team tryouts in the fall of 1962 through the 1963 workups. This was a common practice each season. Log book records reveal the aircraft was flown by both lead solo F/L Ed McKeogh and opposing solo F/L Dave Barker for formation, solo and co-solo aerobatics during this period, as well as slot pilot F/L C.B. Lang and right wingman F/L Al Young for formation and solo aerobatics.

### Retired

The aircraft destined to become the modern day 'Hawk One' finished its RCAF/CAF service with the Sabre Transition Unit (STU) at RCAF Stn/CFB Chatham. Terry Elphick was the last RCAF pilot to do a full tour on the Sabre in Canada. He was also one of the last air force pilots to fly Sabre 23314, doing so for the last time on December 31, 1968. The aircraft was then flown to Mountain View, Ontario by Captain Rocky Van Vliet of 129 Ferry Flight and placed in storage on January 23, 1969. Sabre 23314 was struck-off-strength from the Canadian Armed Forces on September 9, 1970, having been sold to Maritime Aircraft Repair & Overhaul of Moncton, New Brunswick.

Seen at Reno, Nevada in 1972, Sabre 23314 carries a typically 'seventies' colour scheme and the registration N8687D. Doug Fisher collection





The author with 2012 RCAF Hornet demo pilot Captain Pat Gobeil at the Wings Over Gatineau Air Show in September. Peter Handley via Dan Dempsey



"Helping kids dream big" – all part of the Hawk One mission statement. Tamara Price via Dan Dempsey

## Civil History

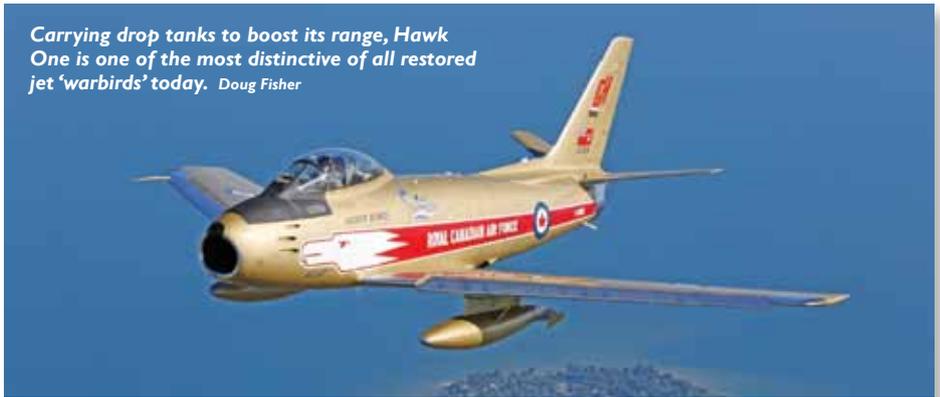
After being purchased by Maritime Aircraft, the jet was issued the civilian registration CF-BKH but remained in outdoor storage at Mountain View, Ontario until at least June 1971. It was ultimately sold to Leroy Penhall/Fighter Imports Inc at Chino, California and departed Canada in February 1972, reregistered in the USA as N8687D. Three years later it passed to the famed Whittington Brothers who operated it under the Air Sabre Inc banner from West Palm Beach, Florida until 1978.

**"Over 15,000,000 North Americans watched the Golden Hawks weave their aerial magic"**

By 1980 the jet was back at Chino having been sold to prolific 'warbird' collector David Tallichet. It remained part of his Military Aircraft Restoration Corporation until October 1987 when it joined Jim Robinson's Combat Jets Flying Museum at Houston, Texas and was painted in USAF colours as '12897' / 'The Huff'. In 1992 Jim donated it and many of his other jets to the EAA Aviation Foundation at Oshkosh, Wisconsin, where it remained at the EAA Museum for many years, even after its sale to John Mark in 1996.

In September 2007 the jet was repatriated to Canada to join the Vintage Wings of Canada collection at Gatineau, Quebec where it was issued the new Canadian registration C-GSBR

Carrying drop tanks to boost its range, Hawk One is one of the most distinctive of all restored jet 'warbirds' today. Doug Fisher



Hawk One departs for another airshow routine. The aircraft is flown by a small cadre of former Canadian fighter pilots and has been displayed across Canada and the northern USA. Doug Fisher



(Gold Sabre). On September 23, 2008 the fully refurbished jet was rolled out in its interim paint scheme and on January 14 of the following year it returned to Vintage Wings having been repainted into its new Golden Hawk/100th anniversary livery by volunteers at 1 Air Maintenance Sqn at 4 Wing, Cold Lake, Alberta.

## Hawk One Airshows

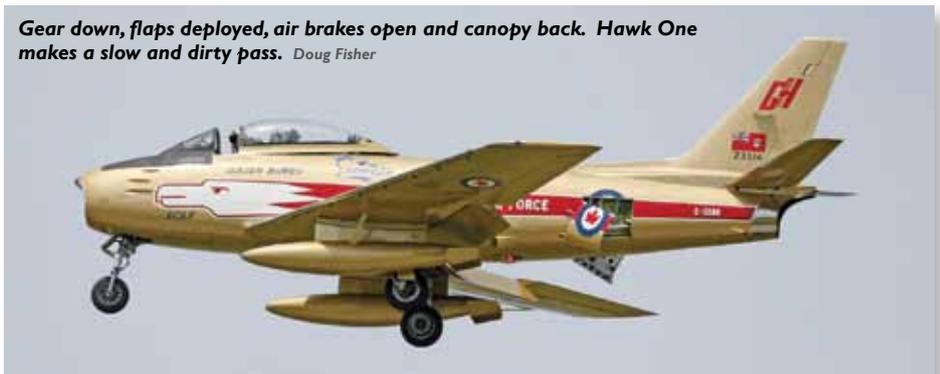
Since its first public appearance on February 22, 2009 in the hands of team pilot and astronaut Chris Hadfield, Hawk One has performed at every major Canadian airshow thanks to the generosity of Vintage Wings of Canada founder Michael Potter and a collection of dedicated corporate sponsors and donors. Led by Discovery Air, benefactors over the years have included Magellan Aerospace, Orenda Engines, Westjet Airlines, Inter Pipeline, Canadian Natural Resources Ltd, Raytheon Canada, Mark's Work Warehouse, Encana, Acadia Broadcasting, Skyservice, Skyplan, Nav Canada, Garmin, Slip One Digital, the Government of Saskatchewan and Cirrus Research Associates. The aircraft has been a magnet for young and old eyes alike as

Hawk One team pilots have demonstrated the classic lines of the jet through a full aerobatic display, followed by sessions allowing airshow patrons to sit in the cockpit for photographs with the assistance of their ground crew. It is one of the most rewarding aspects of a tour on the team and something Vintage Wings of Canada specialises in.

Ever mindful of the legacy the Sabre represents, team members spend considerable time welcoming veterans to look over the aircraft and dozens have taken the opportunity to get back into the cockpit of the jet they all loved to fly or work on in the days of their youth. With many well into their 80s, Hawk One offers a unique journey down memory lane. And of course, all are thrilled to see the Sabre fly again.

In 2010 the Hawk One team honoured Canadair test pilot Al Lilly by putting his name on the side of the aircraft to commemorate the role he played as the senior test pilot at Canadair in addition to being the first person to break the sound barrier in Canada in the Canadair F-86 prototype. Then, in April 2012, the team rededicated the jet to Sqn Ldr Fern Villeneuve,

Gear down, flaps deployed, air brakes open and canopy back. Hawk One makes a slow and dirty pass. Doug Fisher



## PRESERVATION

the first team leader of the Golden Hawks and one of Canada's oldest active pilots. They also honoured Bill Briggs, Villeneuve's original crew chief, and Johnny Blache, the original designer of the magnificent Golden Hawk livery, by making them Honorary Crew Chiefs.

### Flying Hawk One

As legend would suggest, flying the F-86 Sabre is a dream. She is very agile and accelerates and rolls effortlessly. Aerobatics are a joy to fly, especially with the automatic leading edge slats that yield additional manoeuvrability in tight turns and at slow speeds. With only one flight, one immediately appreciates why the Sabre earned the reputation she still enjoys to today as one of the classic fighter aircraft of all time.

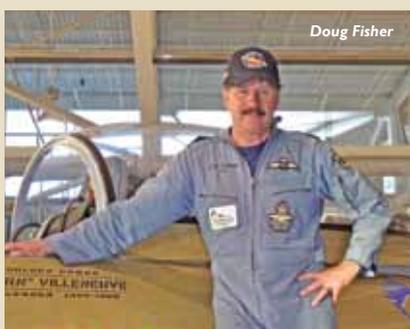
### Role Models

While saluting the past is an integral component of the Hawk One team's appearances, - our broader mandate is to educate and inspire the next generation of aviators and professionals who will follow in our footsteps. In this regard, the team has enjoyed the services of many exemplary role models, including astronauts Chris Hadfield

and Jeremy Hansen, both made available to the team courtesy the Canadian Space Agency. Both Canadian-trained fighter pilots, they each represent fine examples for young people to look up to and emulate – Hadfield the veteran of two space flights who will take command of the International Space Station next March during his third voyage into space and Hansen, the rookie

with three years of astronaut training under his belt in preparation for his eventual first flight into space. Their success stories resonate well with Hawk One's 'Pursue Your Dreams' campaign introduced in 2011 to further motivate young people through personal appearances and special presentations. It has been a popular programme – and long may it continue. ●

*The 2012 Discovery Air Hawk One team. L to R, Front Row - Pierre Clément, Dan Dempsey, Maj Jeremy Hansen, Mike Woodfield, Rob Fleck, WO Mike Underwood; Centre Row - Angela Gagnon, André Laviolette, Guy Richard; Top - Paul Kissmann. Peter Handley via Vintage Wings of Canada*



Former Snowbird Commander Dan Dempsey is one of the original Hawk One team founders and 2012 marked his third season flying C-GSBR on the airshow circuit under the call sign "Golden Hawk One." He has recently handed command of the team to his successor and fellow demo pilot, Mike Woodfield, a former CF-18 Hornet demo pilot.

Dan was born into an air force family and grew up near RCAF Stations where he watched the Golden Hawks perform. His passion for flying led to a 23-year career with the Canadian Forces that included flying the coveted solo positions with the Snowbirds team for the 1980-1981 airshow seasons. He also flew the CF-5 Freedom Fighter and CF-104 Starfighter before returning to command the Snowbirds in 1989 and 1990, during which time he led the team through their 20th anniversary and 1,000th official performance. He later spent over 15 years with Cathay Pacific flying the Tristar, Boeing 747-400 and Boeing 777 airliners before retiring and joining Top Aces Inc, a wholly owned subsidiary of Discovery Air, which provides combat support training to the Canadian Forces. Dan's logbooks now record over 14,000 hours flying time.

## SPECIFICATION

### Canadair Sabre 6



*Andy Hay / www.flyingart.co.uk*

<b>Crew</b>	1
<b>Length</b>	37ft 6in (11.43m)
<b>Height</b>	14ft 9in (4.49m)
<b>Wingspan</b>	37ft 1.5in (11.32m)
<b>Wing area</b>	313.4sq ft (29.11m <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Empty Weight</b>	10,618lb (4,816kg)
<b>Max Take-Off Weight</b>	17,560lb (7,965kg)
<b>Service Ceiling</b>	54,000ft (16,460m)
<b>Max Cruise Speed</b>	616kts (710mph/1,142km/h)
<b>Ferry Range</b>	920 miles (1,480km)
<b>Powerplant</b>	One Avro Canada Orenda 14 turbojet (7,275lb/thrust)
<b>Armament</b>	Six Browning M-2 .50-Cal machine guns.
<b>First Flight</b>	August 8, 1950 (Sabre I) November 2, 1954 (Sabre 6)

ADVERT



Two Canadian Legends in the sky together for a unique photo shoot. The Vintage Wings of Canada Sabre 'Hawk One' (C-GSBR) flown by team leader Dan Dempsey is joined in formation by the Canadian Warplane Heritage Avro Lancaster X FM213 (C-FVRA). The Lancaster is marked as 'KB726' and carries the codes 'VR-A' in tribute to Pilot Officer Andrew Charles Mynarski, VC, of 419 (Moose) Squadron, 6 (RCAF) Group., the Commonwealth's highest award for gallantry in battle. On the night of June 12/13, 1944 Mynarski won 6 Group's only Victoria Cross after KB726 was shot down by a Luftwaffe night fighter. As the bomber plunged earthwards, Mynarski, his flying clothing alight, tried in vain to free his trapped rear gunner from the jammed rear turret. Miraculously, the gunner lived to relate the story of Mynarski's bravery. Unfortunately, Mynarski died from his severe burns. Doug Fisher



