

Dave Riggs The Wild Child Courts G's

"I have nothing against team sports, but let's face it, air to air combat above the desert in a military jet kinda beats golf," says Dave Riggs, 45. His website, wildchildjet.com, says it: The man who in 2005 made aviation history as the first pilot to set three FAI World Speed Records (piston-powered Class 1b at 312.12 mph; rotorcraft Class 2b at 120.65 mph; and jet Class 3e at 561 mph) lives for "the feeling of freedom and the thrill of the adrenaline rush."

"I consider life an adventure and every day a potential challenge," he says. "I have proved to myself I have, dare I say? the right stuff."

Dare away. First a private, multi-engine, instrument and helicopter pilot and then: owner of a former Soviet light attack fighter trainer, the L-39 – a plane capable of .84 Mach and speeds approaching 450 knots. "What a joy to fly!" he says. I always could "see myself pulling g's and dogfighting my way to Acehood!" But seriously. "Pushing the envelope in life means taking risks and seeking the rewards associated with those risks," he says.

Talk about intense! He refers to training to fly his L-39. "Energy management, combat reversals, transonic buffet, mach tuck, high g climbs, bomb delivery descents, loops, snap rolls...AGGGHHHH. Was I ever going to get this stuff right?" he recalls. "My friends and family thought I was crazy to be screaming around in a plane like this," he says. One crazy day the screaming was timed. He and pilot Jeffrey Acord flew from Los Angeles to Phoenix in 39 minutes, 58 seconds – a record.

"It's my life as a middle-aged fighter pilot," laughs Riggs. "For me, flight is about enjoying it, and a record is about planning and precision, to get a speed record you have to do everything right. And that is fun to try."

Catch up with (if you can) the Wild Child himself at wildchildjet.com

