

Blue Angels History

At the end of World War II, Chester W. Nimitz, then the Chief of Naval Operations, ordered the formation of a flight demonstration team to keep the public interested in naval aviation. The Blue Angels performed their first flight demonstration less than a year later in June 1946 at their home base, Naval Air Station (NAS) Jacksonville, Florida. Flying the Grumman F6F Hellcat, they were led by Lt. Cmdr. Roy "Butch" Voris.

Only two months later on August 25, 1946, the Blue Angels transitioned to the Grumman F8F Bearcat. One year later, the 1947 team, led by Lt. Cmdr. Robert Clarke, introduced the now famous "Diamond Formation."

By the end of the 1940's the Blue Angels were flying their first jet aircraft, the Grumman F9F-2 Panther. In response to the demands placed on naval aviation in the Korean Conflict, the team reported to the aircraft carrier USS Princeton as the nucleus of Fighter Squadron 191 (VF-191), Satan's Kittens, in 1950.

The team reorganized the next year and reported to NAS Corpus Christi, Texas, where they began flying the newer and faster version of the Panther, the F9F-5. The Blue Angels remained in Corpus Christi until the winter of 1954 when they relocated to their present home base at NAS Pensacola, Florida. It was here that they progressed to the swept-wing Grumman F9F-8 Cougar.

The ensuing 20 years saw the Blue Angels transition to two more aircraft, the Grumman F11F-1 Tiger (1957) and the McDonnell Douglas F-4J Phantom II (1969).

In December 1974, the Navy Flight Demonstration Team began flying the McDonnell Douglas A-4F Skyhawk II and was reorganized as the Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron. This reorganization permitted the establishment of a commanding officer vice a flight leader (Cmdr. Tony Less was the squadron's first official commanding officer), added support officers and further redefined the squadron's mission, emphasizing the support of recruiting efforts.

On November 8, 1986, the Blue Angels completed their 40th anniversary year during ceremonies unveiling their present aircraft, the new sleek F/A-18 Hornet, the first dual-role fighter/attack aircraft now serving on the nation's front lines of defense.

In 1992 more than one million people viewed Blue Angels' performances during a 30-day European deployment to Sweden, Finland, Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, the United Kingdom and Spain. This was the first European deployment in 19 years.

The 2008 show season brought out more than 13 million spectators. Since 1946, the Blue Angels have performed for more than 455 million fans.