

# DARTS -VS- VIPERS

OR

Two Air Defense **Interceptor** Pilots -vs- Two Tactical **Fighter** Pilots

Circa 1984

I was a Captain stationed at Tyndall AFB as an F-106 Instructor. This day my wingman, a fellow Captain and Instructor, and I were scheduled for Dissimilar Air Combat Training (DACT) with two F-16s from Shaw AFB. I was to be the Instructor for the training on the Air Combat Maneuvering Instrumentation Range (ACMI) over the Gulf of Mexico, a highly accurate tracking system that would record all maneuvers in the airspace by the aircraft, score all shots taken and simulate any kills. None of us had ever fought against the other type fighter. **Tactical** Air Command pilots considered **Air Defense** pilots a lesser breed.

I started the preflight briefing after introductions with the Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) and his wingman a Lieutenant (LT). The LTC immediately interrupted and informed me that he had no idea why they were scheduled for DACT with aircraft that were far inferior to the F-16 and that it would not be much of a challenge for them resulting in very little effective training. He stated that we should engage with full up all weapons capability for both fighter types even stating that though they only had heaters (heat seeking missiles) and guns he saw no disadvantage for them. I hid the fact that he had pissed us off and verified that he meant for us to use the full weapons capability of the F-106. He replied, of course you can! Obviously he had no idea what we carried between our legs, a clueless state of mind! I smiled as I looked at my wingman while stroking the inside of my thigh; this pecker checker was going to get hammered when the Genie popped up!

I briefed the LTC to take his flight to the farthest most southern point of the airspace and be prepared to attack the coastline that we would defend. We would place ourselves on "Five" (five minute alert) and scramble when we saw him takeoff giving him the advantage of being ready when we arrived. I told him to be sure to look at the F-106 ramp on takeoff to verify that we there on "Five" and this would be important during the debrief. We briefed two engagements followed by join up for 1v1 basic fighter maneuvers (BFM), him versus me and the wingmen against each other.

The fun began as they lifted off and saw us on the edge of the ramp, "communicating", with a raised finger over two rising moons! We had a hard time getting our crew chiefs to stop laughing so we could launch. A gate (full afterburner) climb to 41,000 feet put us in the airspace in 6 minutes when I called "fight's on"! I felt sorry for my wingman because he would not get a shot on this first engagement. One minute later I called "Fox 3, KILL, two F-16s north bound at 18,000 feet. Nock- it off, nock-it off, fights over, return to your safe area," was immediately passed to the Viper pilots. The LTC was so confused that the ground control intercept (GCI) controller had to tell him he had been shot by a "NUC" (Genie nuclear tipped rocket) and that him and his wingman were DEAD so return to your point! I told

GCI to inform him that we had one more Genie but that we wouldn't use it on the next engagement.

**Score: Darts 2, Vipers 0**

I put my wingman in four mile trail as we began the next engagement from 41,000 feet at 1.2 MACH racing down to their altitude of 18,000 feet, dumb a - - he didn't even change his altitude to make it harder on us. Since they had face heaters (firing heat seekers in our face), we cooled our jets by retarding the engines to idle power to cool them off and denying the face shot while maintaining supersonic on our downhill slide. They took the bait, the leader rolled out behind me, the wingman behind mine. We had them right where we wanted them! Not even an F-16 can sustain a climb followed by a 9 G turn and roll out 2 miles behind a supersonic target and chase them down so the missile will make the kill. The leader found himself in front of my wingman who easily "Doe popped" him with two missiles while outrunning the F-16 wingman. **Score: Darts 1, Vipers 0**

After a fuel check we split for 1v1 BFM. Starting from line abreast each fighter turns 45 degrees away from the other to gain spacing. At the fight's on call the fighters turn toward each other passing canopy to canopy with no advantage. The knife fight begins in earnest as they turn to gain six o'clock on the other for a guns kill. Hands are helpful in explaining what happens next. Obviously the Viper can out turn a Dart and the LTC was behind me closing for guns! My next maneuver required exact timing or it would turn out all bad. As he closed for the shot I presented him with the infamous "F-106 Barn Door". This is a frightening experience for anyone who has never seen the Dart act in such an unbelievable aerodynamic manner. Never attempt this maneuver at home as it should only be done by a highly trained and experienced Dart driver! With him captured solidly at my six, in a hard four G turn, closing for the kill, fangs out and dripping, I held the G while applying full opposite rudder. The Dart responds beautifully with an opposite direction roll through the vertical to a full nose down dive where I apply full afterburner and dash for the deck. From the Viper's cockpit it looked just like someone opened a barn door in his face, nowhere to go and no idea what to do. Suddenly the Dart disappears. His only option was to call nock-it off because he lost sight having never squeezed the trigger. Meanwhile our wingman had to nock-it off because the LT was low on fuel. **Score: Darts 0, Vipers 0**

I sent the Vipers home and my wingman and I played for a while. My debriefing was short and sweet. The **Fighter** pilots had to fly again to get some real training. It went something like this: Know your enemy. Never underestimate your enemy. Never enter a gun fight with a knife. Never engage an enemy when you don't have a clue. Lose sight lose the fight. Pecker checkers should be well endowed. When the Genie pops up, you're gonna die! Nothing was ever said about the moons, I believe we "communicated" effectively!

**Final Score: Darts 3, Vipers 0** America remained safe from attack!!

S. Michael Townsend, LTC, USAF Ret. "Viper 1, Pierre, Bucko, Genie, FMO, Rafsob"