

A race from Gander!

(by Hugh Williams, ex-ATC, 11 Aug 2017)

On an early afternoon in the fall of 1961, a Pan American Clipper flight 101, Boeing 707 service from London (EGLL) to New York (KIDL - Idlewild at the time), had just landed in Gander.



At the same time, getting ready to depart Gander for a flight to New York was British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC, now British Airways) passenger aircraft.

Its call sign was "Speedbird 509", Comet service from London to New York.



Clipper 101 said to Speedbird 509: " Leave it full-rich and I'll beat you to New York".

By now, Speedbird 509 is sitting on what is called the button of runway 22, the very end, cleared for takeoff. He stands on the brakes, goes full-throttle and waits ten seconds.

As he sits there, the surface layer of the button of runway 22 starts to peel off (it looked like tar paper flying around). He released his brakes and took-off like a fighter jet.

Until the urgent repairs were done, airport authorities had to close the first 300 feet of runway 22.

We are still looking to find out who actually won!