

Spend Time with FGA

Jayden Lawson

Was the weekend customised sufficiently to suit your requirements?

Absolutely. Chad helped answer all my questions (that I could think of), and I learned a whole stack of new things that I didn't think I needed to know. I'm sure I could learn a lot more from him if the time was longer.

What aspects of the weekend worked for you and what did not? ie: what could Chad have improved to make your time here more rewarding?

Being able to chat and ask Chad anything was fantastic. And learning little tricks in building a new quad was excellent.

The rain was a bummer, but we made the most of the time. I think adding set times for things would work well. Eg. an arrival time. Lunch times, break times. And a leaving time. That last one could be important, as I'm sure some people would tend to linger around for ages!

Another improvement would be to add some background music. I enjoyed the intensity of the weekend where we concentrating on stuff I really liked so music would just help to add to the relaxed atmosphere. Besides, I really like Chad's choice in music.

Was the time sufficient for you to get what you were hoping for?

Yes. I was mainly looking to learn how to properly set up a quad, and learn some tips and tricks, and I certainly got more than I hoped for, which was fantastic.

What was the standout aspect about the weekend? What was the worst part and how would you change this?

Standout: Chad's easy-going approach and almost total knowledge on most FPV subjects. He's a great host and open to helping with anything which was excellent.

Worst part was the rain! But despite this I got to focus on more building so that wasn't really a bad thing.

Did you feel that the weekend was money well spent?

Yes. Absolutely.

Did the accommodation, meals, venue etc come up to your expectations?

The meals more than met expectations. Saturday's lunch platter was fantastic, and the BBQ on the Sunday was superb. Breakfast too was delicious.

Was there anything you thought Chad should have included/covered during the weekend but didn't?

No. I was aware that to make it worthwhile for myself, I needed to ask as many questions as I could to learn as much as I could. So in that sense Chad helped as best he could in the time allotted.

Would you recommend the weekend to other FPV pilots? Be honest.

Most definitely! I already have recommended the sessions to other pilots I know! It was great to see how to do things quite a good deal better than I have been doing myself, and learn a whole bunch of things that I didn't know about. I'd recommend it for anyone that wants to learn how to improve their setup, in all areas - from the quad build, to camera and Vtx setup, to the radio, to Goggle setup. It really is all inclusive, which makes it so great. If you want to save hours of frustration spend an hour with Chad - you will be amazed at how much you pick up.

Any other suggestions?

There was mention made about running some informal/brief get-together fly sessions for attendee pilots. What a great idea! I guess it's hard if people come from a long way away, but I'd certainly come back for that at his place, or wherever it might be held if Chad is on the road.

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When I first realised the potential of FPV for photography/video in my line of work I quickly sought to find out more. Because I am not part of a FPV flying club/group I searched the internet and came across Chad's build videos. They were very helpful to a novice like me and I was impressed with his cinematography skills as well. It took some time to build my first Alien and I kept tinkering. I read a lot and solved problems through trial and error. I quite like the quad building process but initial efforts at filming from my quad were not as satisfying as I would have liked. That's when I read "A weekend with FGA." I wanted to give it a go. I filled in the enquiry form on the FGA web site and waited for a reply.

The form requested information about my level of expertise and what I flew. I have always had a soft spot for Chad Nowak since the first time I saw his videos and was pleased when he called me to discuss my specific needs and wants. This pre session briefing was just what I needed because it gave me a chance to chat about all those little things that were frustrating me. I told him that I particularly needed to learn how to better capture footage without oscillations (jello). I was also keen to build a quad from scratch because my "trusty" Alien was in dire need of upgrading - it was experiencing problems that I could not fix.

Chad gave me a list of components he recommended to buy and once these arrived we negotiated a training date. This took a couple of weeks.

I arrived at 9.30am on the Saturday. Chad's apartment is located in a rural area right next door to a forested valley. I could not help but be impressed with the location - what an amazing place to fly/

test a quad. The day was quite dreary with intermittent drizzle and an overcast sky. In fact it rained and rained AND kept raining all weekend. Not ideal conditions for flying. Despite this annoyance the time we spent together was still very memorable.

Chad's pad is cozy but well set up for guests - comfortable guest bedroom, a table set aside for quad building with appropriate tools and a bench set up especially for parallel charging batteries. An outside table under the covered deck is perfect when it comes time to tune and fly your quad. You can literally walk out the front door and start flying. Chad told me he does just that, often in his underpants.

We spent the whole Saturday building my new Reverb. I am not particularly skilled at soldering so I learned lots of great tips about building including clever short cuts. Having Chad beside me allowed me to ask questions and try new things. My mind was blown many times. This guy really knows his stuff. I was in awe. At one point, after our sandwich lunch, we needed some extra bits and pieces so we hopped into the car and found what we needed at the nearby Jaycar shop (much like a Dick Smith electronics shop of old). In the evening we had dinner at the local pub exchanging stories and talking FPV. I continued to learn lots of interesting tidbits about building and flying drones throughout that evening.

The next day was given over to problem solving, specifically related to my old trusty Alien. I had a number of persistent niggly issues that Chad helped me with. Just watching as he isolated each problem was very enlightening. Its something I will now try to do in my future build and maintenance processes. Eventually we were able to identify the issues/solutions and finish most of the jobs I had lined up. A late BBQ lunch on the deck with the kangaroos below us topped off a great training session. The weekend was over far too quickly.

Although the new quad had been somewhat waterproofed the drizzling rain meant limited fly time. At the end of the day Chad asked me to meet up again some time soon at a time of my choosing for a few hours flying (at no extra cost).

Impressions

1. **I simply loved everything about the weekend.** Pure indulgence on my part but I learned so much about so many things I never realised. Chad is meticulous for a reason. *“Get it right the first time and you will never regret it.”* I marvel at his building skills. He taught me heaps.
2. **I really appreciated Chad’s apartment.** Located right next door to a forested valley, it is perfect for flying. The bed was very comfy, the food was yummy and the area set aside for building and charging was great.
3. A weekend spent immersing yourself in all things FPV was always my dream, especially with an expert like Chad guiding me and showing me how to do things properly. We were able to **build a complete quad and trouble shoot issues** I had with my other quad. Unfortunately it kept raining all weekend so fly was limited. I hope to get a few hours of flying with Chad in the near future.
4. **Was it worth the investment?** Unequivocally, **YES**. I learned so much in the 15 hours we spent on the work bench and in chatting informally during our lunches, breakfast and dinner. Chad is very easy to get on with and he makes you feel very relaxed - so many very funny stories and practical advice punctuated our time together. If you calculate his labour at \$23 per hour, with \$20 for

food and approx \$85 for overnight accommodation - a full one-on-one weekend with an expert - the weekend is actually very inexpensive. Spending just one hour with this guy will save you many hours of time lost in frustration. I see lots of people shell out their hard earned money to get into this fascinating hobby but then seldom the return on investment in satisfaction or flying time that they hoped. If only we all had an opportunity to spend a weekend with Chad then we would have far less issues and far more happiness.



5. **What would I change?** - if anything? Nothing really. Pity about the rain but the extra time allowed me to spend more time on the technical aspects of building. The only thing missing for me was maybe having some background music. I love Chad’s choice of video music so I would have liked to know more about how he finds appropriate music. So, all in all, it was one amazingly memorable weekend where I immersed myself totally in a hobby I get a lot of joy in.

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