**2006 Chase Summaries**

Tour 3, Day 1 (May 26th):

Left OKC at 6:30 AM headed for Goodland, KS with a target of Akron, CO. On the way up just before Wichita, KS we encountered a blob of multi-cellular junk which produced a fairly picturesque shelf cloud right in our path so we pulled off and took some shots and let the gust front pass over. A nice little bonus for starters.

We then proceeded to I-70 and west all the way to Goodland where we stopped at the NWS office. While we were there we observed a very nice accas field, then when we were inside getting a tour the Denver NWS office issued a tornado warning on a storm east of Denver so we decided to go after it. We got sucked in a bit though because this storm was on the wrong side of the dry line and by the time we got close to it in Genoa, CO it was already dead. Roger was apparently under it when it was warned and labeled it a "high based piece of junk". Meanwhile as we headed west we watched the dry line behind us explode with convection. We probably should have just stayed there but oh well. After the Limon storm we bolted back east towards Colby, KS to watch one of the dry line storms that had become anchored over Oakley, KS. We were hoping for good lightning and sunset but it was obscured by cloud debris. We ate dinner in Colby then drove for 2+ more hours up to North Platte, NE for the night.

One of the most grueling driving days I've had as we traveled 905 miles starting at 6:30 AM and stopping at about midnight. Then we got up at 5:30 AM!

Tour 3, Day 2 (May 27th):
We got on the road again at 06:30 – Target Bismarck, North Dakota. We headed North out of North Platte up Rt. 83 to Valentine, then on through Pierre, SD and up to I-94 just east of Bismarck. We already had our hotel rooms booked in Bismarck and we almost just went to the hotel to unload and get data, but the area was starting to percolate with cumulus congestus so we stopped at a truck stop with a couple of other groups of chasers we know well. Towers fired up and down the long, arching occluded front to the northeast of the surface low we were playing until finally the cap broke. This turned out to be about the easiest chasing I've done. The storms were moving almost due north, and we just kept reusing two observing locations about 5 miles apart on either side of the highway. We watched a train of 3 clustered storms try to get their act together first, then when they interfered with each other we dropped south to a small highly electrified HP supercell that deluged south of Bismarck, showing a nice rain foot and pretty good structure. After chasing it north back to our original location it tried to form a wall cloud but couldn't really get it together. We then dropped back to our southern locale again for the final storm in line and watched the nicely structured supercell for about an hour, then found high ground for an amazing sunset lightning show on the top of a butte. From there you could see clearly for miles in any direction and we could see Bismarck 20+ miles in the distance. We watched as the storm approached it and went by, shooting lightning all the while. We got into the hotel at about 11:30 PM. We drove 530 miles this day for almost 1500 already in 2 days!

Tour 3, Day 3 (May 28th).

We targeted Devil’s Lake in extreme Northeast North Dakota. Once we arrived we waited for hours for the cap to break as we had very high CAPE. When it finally did towers exploded along the front and we were preparing to chase a developing LP storm nearby, when off in the distance we saw… FOG!! The storm got rammed by the approaching cold front and rapidly tied. We were prepared to chase this one into Canada if need be. Finally, we hit the road and after a couple of photo-op stops we reached the hotel in Fargo, ND late.

Mileage for today 521, total (3 days) 1,965

Tour 3, Day 4 (May 29th).

Spent the day repositioning, adding another 800 miles to our now nearly 3000 mile tally over 4 days. We started in Fargo and ended up in Wichita with Roger's group. A multi-cellular blob awaited us as we came into Wichita about midnight which offered a few nice anvil crawlers, but luckily the core was not as strong as it looked on radar so it didn't delay us getting in. Roger and his 3 vans were there as well so it was an official SLT convergence zone! By the time we got to the hotel however, they were all in bed.

Tour 3, Day 5 (May 30th): 605 chase miles today (3368 for T3 so far)

Started the day in Wichita, KS. Today’s target was the stalled frontal boundary across Kansas and the Texas panhandle. We pushed west to Liberal, KS and picked up the first cell just north of there. The cell went severe but was cut off and died not long after.

We then targeted an isolated tail end Charlie cell near to Arnett, OK. Unfortunately, we were behind the storm, which had an odd configuration: The anvil was pushing off to the northeast, but storm motion was to the south-southeast. In order to intercept, we decided to core punch the storm despite knowing that it contained very large hail. Luckily, we caught only a glancing blow from the core and managed to punch through to the southeast of the precipitation core unscathed.

By now the cell was a full-blown supercell. It soon dropped a wall cloud and then a 30 second needle funnel. A new cell formed to the south and soon began to merge with the supercell we were chasing. After some positioning, we were able to set up right beside a new meso updraft that soon again produced a low wall cloud with rapid rotation. It also had an awesome tail cloud form off the wall cloud. Twice the rotation in the wall cloud tried to focus into a tornado but it was not to be. We were actually only 300 – 500 meters away from the wall cloud as it tried to spin up.

The wall cloud occluded and the storm started to lose focus, so we moved south as another cell merged into the rapidly growing storm. This time the storm had just barely started to form a lowering before the storm became outflow dominant and really started to hail out. So, we blasted to Erick on I40 where we found two empty carwash bays were we parked up the van and allowed the full core of the storm to pass over us. There was a deluge of rain and estimated 60 mph winds, enough to blow down some tree limbs. We didn’t get the big hail however, just a few bursts of pebble sized hail. We had a hard time navigating out of town, then went to a truck stop on I-40 for dinner. When we passed through Erick about 2 hours later it was still absolutely pouring there, the flooding must have been horrendous.

The big opportunity for this storm was right after the first cell merger. It did everything but tornado and the wall cloud was cascading so much that I almost couldn't believe it didn't. The storm was just a little too high based for the rotation to get to the ground.

We finished up in Liberal, Kansas ready for an upslope Colorado target the next day.

Tour 3, Day 6 (May 31st).

We started the day in Liberal, KS heading for Limon, CO, making stops at the Wizard of Oz museum, the Two Buttes Wind Farm and other photo opportunities along the way. We had dilly-dallied a bit too much though and by the time we got up there we had a full-blown supercell on our hands. The storm had a well defined meso and produced a couple of solid wall clouds and a big tail cloud, but didn't show all that much rotation under the wall despite solid rotation in the mesocyclone as a whole. We made a run along I-70, staying ahead of the huge hail core and getting off at just about every exit. Eventually the storm went totally outflow dominant and we decided to get "cored" again so we pulled into a gas station, sheltered the vans, and waited. Unfortunately, the cell split and the two cores passed us on either side so we headed west and got nailed on the highway with very strong win and a pile of marble sized hail that quickly stacked up a couple of inches deep. We got off and into position again, but this time the core fizzled out to our West. We then went back and collected hail, which was still all over the place 30 minutes after the storm. The temperature had decreased over 20 degrees! We then hung around and watched the excellent mammatus display on the back of the storm then drove into Denver for the evening. We ran into Roger's group along the way, but they were still hop-scotching west when we went to sample the core.

Tour 3, Day 7 (June 1st).

Total bustola and we headed to the top of Mount Evans, the highest paved road in the United States for some nice scenery. Then back to the same hotel in Denver.

Tour 3, Day 8 (June 2nd).

We drove up through Wyoming today from Denver with the idea of taking the group to Devil's Tower since we had an off day. We made it to within about 60 miles when a couple of small storms blew up and we went careening through the Black Hills after them. I did finally get to see Devil's Tower far off in the distance. The storms had very nice structure but they were severely high-based and I don’t believe they ever went severe. Finally, the storms collapsed and we went to Mount Rushmore. I'd never been there either.

We spent the night in Spearfish, SD with the intent of chasing in Nebraska or South Dakota the next day.

Tour 3, Day 9 (June 3rd).

After spending the early part of the day in the Badlands, we ended up chasing north of Highmore, SD and intercepted a line of 3 cells, the southern most of which became a nice LP storm with impressive mid-level banding. As usual, we went to sample the hail core since the storms were too high based to produce tornadoes, but in this year of the anchored storm the big hail remained to the west of the road just out of reach. When the storm started to rain out it came down fast, producing a nice rain foot and what appeared to be at least one wet microburst. Lastly, as we finally drove away, the storm gave us a beautiful sunset. We then had to drive a grueling 350+ miles down to Kearney, NE, arriving at about 2:30 AM.

Tour 3, Day 10 (June 4th).

Day 10 was a travel day back to OKC, where we arrived at about 8 PM. All in all, it was a brutal driving tour as we racked up 5760 miles and 10 states (Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Iowa, Missouri, Texas, and Wyoming in that order).

Overall, we chased storms on 7 or 10 days despite the close to nil chance of tornadoes, not bad considering the pattern. Only 1 day was purely tourist, though I'd venture a guess that we stopped at more tourist sites and photo ops than any other tour in SLT history!

Final stats for Tour 3: 0 tornadoes but storms on 7 of 10 days and 5760 miles.