

Back around 1983 when Willie Benton, Jim McNab, Chris Hill and I were down at Homestead AFB for F-4 school, Willie and I had a pretty memorable syllabus ride.

Sometime just before this two-ship ride a couple of active duty jets were involved in an accident that centered around a lead change. Also, just before this particular sortie, a gang of us went to see the Orange Bowl football game. While we were there, Willie had purchased one of those giant orange foam fingers.

As a result of the AD accident, the new mandatory lead change procedures went something like this:

Lead gives the hand signal to change lead

#2 gives the head nod in acknowledgement

#2 moves to lead position

The new lead must now report on the radio that "I have the lead"

The new #2 reports on the radio that "You have the lead"

We all thought the whole thing was ludicrous! Just like the new post re-fueling procedures that required all the jets in a formation to be heads-down at the same time to accomplish that checklist. That was a gift from the active duty F-15s - but that's another story ☺

Anyway, toward the end of our sortie Willie was in the lead and had to give the lead to me so we could get out respective formation landing req's done. I could see what was coming as I watched him digging around in his helmet bag, when out pops this giant orange finger that he waves at me in the traditional lead change manner. Both my IP and I were laughing our asses off. There was absolutely no doubt about who had the lead.

During our debrief a little while later, Willie's IP was still smiling and chuckling to himself. Even though he thought it was a great flight lead change, he still busted Willie on that ride for his lead change procedures. ☺