



In this issue:

Rounding the Flag ..... 2  
 The Finish Line ..... 3  
 Speed Gliding -  
 A Judge's Point of View.....4

# SPEEDGLIDING 2002!

When you mention hang gliding, most people think of graceful wings soaring like hawks on the breeze. Peaceful, silent, dreamlike flight without any apparent effort or exertion on the flyers part. While a lot of that appearance of effortless is an illusion, created by a very hard working pilot, that is what hang gliding can be. It can also be something else: Exciting, fast and, more then a little, dangerous. It's called speed gliding and it is a relatively new sport similar to downhill ski racing.

Just like downhill, the object is to make the best time through a series of gates. The difference is that the gates are marked on the ground while the racer is several hundred feet in the air. This requires skill both in flying and in estimating where the gates really are. It's exciting and fun to watch.

Hang gliding has never been that much of a spectator sport. Oh, people like to watch gliders in the air and, in a few places where access is easy, they like to watch people launching off cliffs. But it's not the sort of sport that builds a following or is featured on Sunday sports shows. Speed gliding could change that.

It has everything needed to be a great spectator sport: colorful gliders, high speed maneuvers and landings, the possibility of crashes and even the impressive "whish" of the gliders as they pass overhead. The only real problem is the weather.



Hang gliding is normally a safe, if demanding, sport but when you choose to fly right at the performance limits of your hardware and your own flying skills, it becomes quite a bit more interesting. Speed gliding requires high tech gliders, which are difficult to fly, and piloting skills only the best pilots have. Because the pilot controls a hang glider by shifting his weight, there are limits to the conditions they can be flown in. The weather, wind speed and direction, is a major concern.

Speed gliding requires nearly perfect weather. This means it's very hard to predict when a race will actually be run. Instead of being scheduled for Saturday at 1:00 pm it's more likely to be scheduled for sometime between Friday at 9:00 am and Sunday at 3:00 pm. Spectators tend to get a little bored sitting around watching empty air while the racers wait for the wind to shift from SW to NNW or to drop another 5 miles an hour. Careful choice of location can help a little but speed gliding, like all hang gliding, will always be at the mercy of the wind.

So will you be seeing pictures of Steve flying in one of these events? Not likely! Yes, it's very appealing and just the sort of thing I would have done 30 years ago. Unfortunately, both my glider and my skills are nowhere near up to this kind of flying. To be competitive you need the latest technology and high tech gliders are very difficult to fly. There are some things where low cunning does not make up for age. So I'm afraid my participation will be limited to helping with the events and a little daydreaming.

# ROUNDING THE FLAG



Bob Lane



Gliding into the Sunset



Scott Angel



Bo Hagewood

The course to fly is made visible by hoisting white flags above the trees. Each flag represents a turn which must be performed. Hang gliders fly higher than most of the flags but by standing right below the flag, the judge can tell if the flag is properly rounded. For scoring purposes, the glider and pilot must round the flag with no point of either crossing the vertical plane of the flag. A partial miss penalty is assigned if they fail to do so. Of course, if they are not on the correct side of the flag, they get penalized with a complete miss! Each miss equates to time that is added to the pilots actual run time.



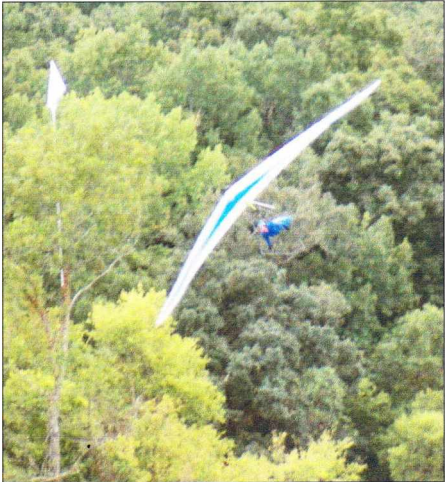
Luiz Neubauer



Jim Prael



Henry Bittner



Ken Brown

# THE FINISH LINE



Gauthier "Gucci" de Levizak



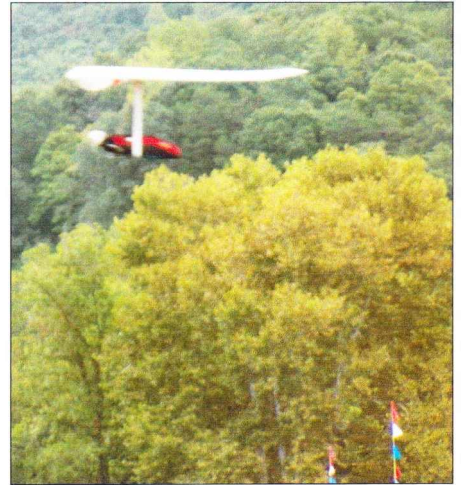
Thad Miller



Chris Giardina

When you're going over eighty miles per hour and just coming out of a 180 degree turn while trying to get between two uprights, it can be pretty hard to also be at a certain height. Never the less, that is exactly what these great pilots were doing, they came out of the last turn and hit their mark in all three dimensions. Extra points were given if at least part of the pilot or glider was below the top of the two poles, and lots of them made it!

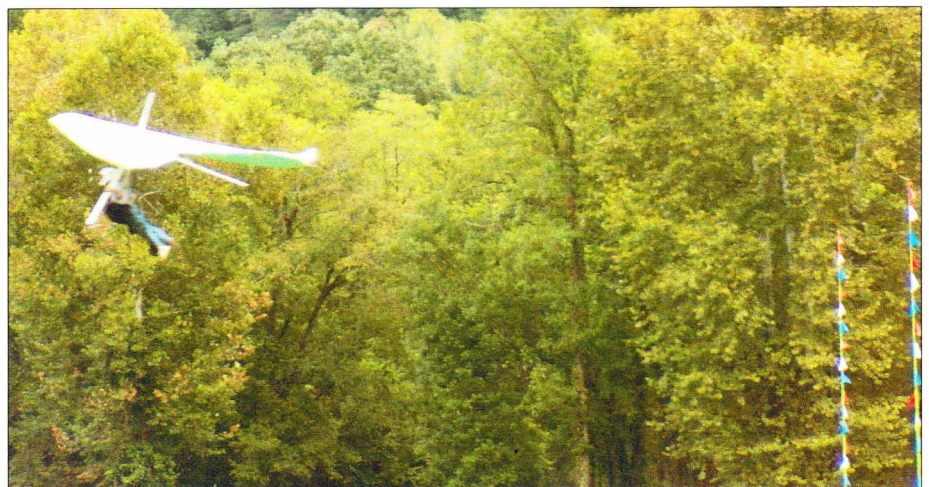
Then they had the minor problem of trying to slow down enough to land before they ran out of landing field!



Mike Thieke



Pete Welch



Dan Rogers

# SPEED GLIDING - A JUDGE'S POINT OF VIEW

The 2002 National Speed Gliding Competition took place at Lookout Mountain Flight Park September 12-15. This was an exciting event requiring lots of people to make it happen. There were 15 pilots competing, 3 tug pilots flying the planes to get the gliders airborne, over 25 volunteers helping judge flags, timing runs and weighing in the gliders not to mention course setup and general assistance from the staff at the flight park and the coordination of Jen Richards and Scot Trueblood the meet director.

There were two courses that could be run. The first, with flags going down the hillside, was obviously the better one. But on a hillside, tailwinds can create havoc with the air along the hill, so an



Scot Trueblood and Luiz Neubauer

alternate course was setup with flags around the landing zone. As a judge who had to move from a flag on one course to a flag on the other course when the course to fly was changed, it required a little more than just saying the alternate course would be flown.

Thursday morning I started at flag 3 on the primary course, which was not flown, so I had to hustle down the road and over to the landing zone to get in place at flag 1 by the parking lot for the alternate course. From there, I not only had a clear view of flag 1, but I could also see the tows out of the field, the gliding down the hill, around the course and the landing of each individual pilot. This was a great spot to see the whole race. There

was one practice round and one official round flown that morning.

Thursday afternoon, when the primary course was run, I was at flag 1 that I watched from the deck on the back of the office. Instead of being at the base of the flagpole there were two strings



Pilots await the decision to Fly

that, when aligned, matched where the flag was. The most exciting thing from this viewpoint was the sound of the gliders as they passed the starting line and approached the first flag. If that didn't indicate speed, I don't know what does. Two rounds were squeezed in before it got too dark to fly.

Since no flying was done on Friday



Waiting for the Results

and Saturday due to the weather, I didn't miss anything, but the photos I was hoping to shoot at those runs.

Sunday didn't look too good initially, but as the fog started to lift, we set up to run the alternate course. Once again I was assigned to the flagpole at the



Dean Funk

parking lot. Then the pilots wanted to fly the original course. Can't say that I blame them, running down the hill, weaving left and right until the finish line is crossed sounds a lot more exciting than just doing a loop around the field. However, I couldn't get the truck out of the parking lot to move to flag 1 on the deck at the top of the field. I hitched a ride to the area of flags 2 and 3. But then found out I was not needed at the top and I didn't need to be a judge.

This allowed me to get those photos I wanted. I took a couple of rounds from the road but the color wasn't very good, then I hitched a ride to the top of the hill just in time for the end of the last round before a break.

For the final round Sunday, I was not needed to judge, so I hung out with the judges at the finish line and got some good pictures of people rounding the last flag and the finish line. There were actually five rounds run on Sunday. At the end of the day, Scott Angel came up the overall winner. For a complete description of the competition, see the December issue of 'Hang Gliding'.



Gliders at Rest

## Travelers Tales Volume 2 Number 1

©2003 S. Hughes | 701 Rainbow Mt Dr | Ellijay, GA 30540 | [steve@shughes.com](mailto:steve@shughes.com) | Published 3/10/03 for SFPA mailing 232

A Flights of Vanity Press publication