

British Paragliding Cup 2007 (Long Mynd Round)

The final round of the British Paragliding Cup (4th-8th August) was located at the Long Mynd in Shropshire, UK. Over 100 pilots had signed up to fly in this FAI Cat 2 event, with some notable names flying in the Open part of the competition.

The event started on Saturday morning with a 10:00 briefing at the Inn on the Green pub in Wentnor, a tiny village that's a stones throw from the Long Mynd itself. Unfortunately, the wind was bending and swaying the many sponsors' windblades, such that it was inevitable there would be a rebrief. This happened several times during the day, with the hope that it would subside as forecast. Eventually the day was canned, but within an hour or so, the wind had dropped so much that it was not even possible to have an evening flight on the Long Mynd.



The second day dawned and there was a light north westerly wind allowing some people to fly as early as 08:30 on the Long Mynd. Once the competitors had made their way to launch a 79km task was set to Alcester. Unfortunately, the wind picked up significantly before the launch window opened at 11:00. Whilst the pilots with full sized wings sat waiting for the wind to subside, Hugh Ginty (official wind dummy) zipped around the sky on his wicked 12m² Nova Shockwave; everyone on the ground



looked up enviously. A later rebrief set a shorter 47km task to start at 18:00, amazingly, the wind did subside and the window opened allowing the majority of the field to take off. Everything looked good with some pilots getting to 800m asl, then the wind (wave) picked up again and pinned everyone where they were in the sky. Pretty swiftly the task was stopped, allowing the pilots in the air to struggle forward to the landing field.



Monday, day 3 had a southerly wind forecast, so it was off to Bache Hill, an hour's drive south from the Long Mynd. When we arrived it was flyable, but the forecast was for it to increase and it did. Many of the free flyers that had launched found it tricky to make any progress in the strengthening wind, leading to a couple of interesting backward landings! As a weather front was on its way, the day was very reluctantly canned.

3-nill to the wind.

The final day of the competition started well; a light north westerly wind, a good forecast and a well chosen hill called the Lawley; a spine-back hill some 12kms north east of the Long Mynd. As the pilot's made their way to the hill along the winding lanes of the Shropshire countryside, some noticed Police and Army vehicles parked in a field not far from the Lawley itself. After parking on the sloping field at the back of the flying site, a short steep walk revealed the take off spot perched on the top of the spine. A task to Tenbury Wells some 31.8km away was set and the window was due to open at 12:15. Then the most bizarre message was broadcast on the safety frequency just as the window was due to open. The task would have to be stopped, as an Army bomb disposal team were working on an unexploded bomb (a 1000lb device that was fixed to a buried Mosquito aircraft!) and they had set a 1-mile no fly



exclusion zone around it. The non-competition flyers that were in air at the time either landed or headed down wind from the exclusion zone. One of those was Steve Ham, who carried on to fly 115km, proving the task from the Lawley was more than possible.

We all packed up, walked down the hill and headed to the nearest

site that would take a north westerly; Corndon. As people were walking up the side of Corndon, they were relieved to see that there were a couple of people already flying. The wind was bang on the hill. Everyone was quick to lay out, as space was limited. The task hooter quickly sounded to announce the task briefing and a 37.3km elapsed time to New Radnor was set. As the window opened at 15:00, the wind had increased, but people were still able to launch OK. Once in the air, it was quite crowded with everyone diving for anyone who looked to be going up. After 20 minutes or so, the majority of the gliders in the air were pinned by the increasing wind, at the same time the launch window was closed for a short while. Soon afterwards, the wind dropped sufficiently for a small gaggle to leave the hill and onto the course. The pilots at the top of the table; Nash, Bungay, Dower and Guthrie stalked each other quite effectively, even leaving together in the same thermal with the second gaggle. It was Brad Nicholas who reported that there was a huge cloud developing on the course, with the rain from it forcing him to land. After some radio messages back and fro, Calvo (meet director) eventually stopped the task on safety grounds.



With this, the overall Cup positions remained as they had stood following the Dales round. The Cup had 6 valid tasks (the most in any BPC) from the 5 rounds. The weather and an unexploded bomb had proved to be the winners at the Long Mynd round, however the determination of the organisers had pulled off tasks at the other rounds when most of the pilots thought the chance of flying was 'slim to none!'

A well-attended prize-giving evening was held at the Inn on the Green, with the British Paragliding Cup being awarded to Steve Nash (Nova TYCOON) on his third year of trying, second place to Richard Bungay and third place to Pat Dower. The Top Woman was Tanya Ephgrave (Nova RA) (placed 9th overall).

Thanks to the organisers of this years BPC: Richard Bungay, Pete Logan, Mal Grace, Chris 'Calvo' Burns, Liz Jenkins and the marshalls. An equally big thanks goes to the sponsors of this competition; Active Edge/Nova, Airwave, Andalucian Experience, Cross Country magazine, Digifly, Independence, Gin, Gradient, Niviuk UK, Ozone, Red Dragon Paragliding and UK Airports.