



Steve Nash - 2009 Flying Report (with a bit of running too !)

FEBRUARY

NOVA Team Meeting - Slovenia had long been on my 'list of places yet to fly', so I was excited when it was announced that the Team meeting would be held at Lijak. I left a dull, wet & windy England and arrived in Slovenia to warm, flyable conditions. I could hardly believe it when we spent most of the weekend flying as much as we pleased alongside the huge ridge that dominates the area. Our hosts, Brigita and Dusan 'went the extra mile' to ensure that everyone had a fantastic weekend.



MARCH

On the 1st day of the month I had a much unexpected XC flight on my trusty IBEX 15. Having arrived late at the Long Mynd flying site (150m high), I was not able to fly with my TRITON as the wind was too strong. Any pilots that were in the air were struggling to land or being forced over the back of the hill in the increasing wind. When I got my IBEX out of its bag, it was only to fly along the ridge until the wind dropped, when I would fly the TRITON off on a cross country flight. As soon as I launched the IBEX, I saw a hang glider coring a thermal, so I joined him. The



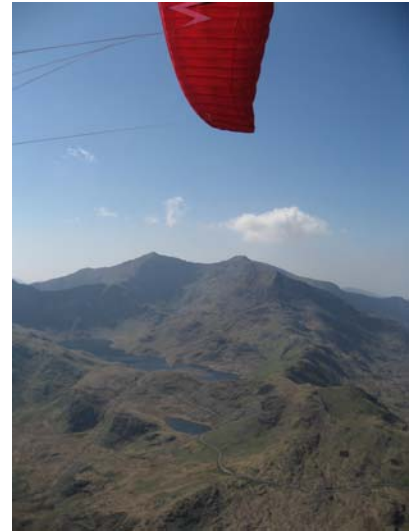
next moment, I am at cloudbase looking East with a line of clouds begging me to follow them. I did so and 5 thermals later found myself on the outskirts of a small city in the Midlands. I decided to land rather than attempt to glide over it, but was still elated when I realised that I had flown almost 45km at an average speed of over 40km/h. This on a wing that most people imagine has the performance of a garage door!



PERFORMANCE PARAGLIDERS

APRIL

For a long time, I had been trying to complete an FAI triangle flight around my local mountains in Snowdonia, Wales. Although at just over 25km this flight would be too modest to even be recorded in the Alps, it represents a reasonable challenge in the UK (mainly due to the negative effects of the sea breezes). It's a great feeling to set yourself a challenge and then to 'nail it'. I learnt a lot during this flight and was lucky enough to have similar conditions one week later, allowing me to repeat and extend the triangle further.



MAY

X Scotia 2009 - The format of this Scottish adventure run/hike & paragliding event was exactly the same as last years, so I used the same 'light and fast' strategy using the IBEX. The only change was to use the IBEX 17 to give me the advantages of the small wing, but with a slightly better ability to stay up if the



winds were light. Despite losing the lead after the first mountain, I regained it later in the race solely because I was confident to launch the IBEX in rather high winds. The guy I beat to 1st place was on a normal sized lightweight mountain wing.

I completed the race in 13 hours 41 mins, almost 2 hours quicker than last year. My fly to run ratio was greater than in 2008, flying 21 km and running 65km.

JUNE

I flew a couple of UK competitions in 2009, but unfortunately most were cancelled due to bad weather. Even the UK round of the British Championships that was planned to take place in Scotland was called off because of high winds.

JULY

Following the poor weather in the UK for competitions, my first real comp flying of the season kicked off in Piedrahita, Spain. We had a windy couple of days to start, which kept us all grounded. Then we enjoyed 5 days of racy tasks, most over 100km distance. A couple of locals were very fast, but I managed to keep at or near the front on most days. One low-save near the end of the 115km task was to be the highlight of the week for me. Lying in 5th place, needing one more climb to goal, four of us failed to find a thermal. Having left cloudbase at 3000m, I was now 30m above a near deserted motorway fighting to stay up, two other pilots went down at this point 3km short of goal. I spotted a small hawk flying in circles about 2 metres above a ploughed field and joined his thermal just as it was breaking away from the soil. I have never concentrated so much on staying in the lift, ignoring street lamps and tree tops as I slowly rose from the clutches of the ground. By the time I had enough height to relax and start thinking of my final glide, another 10 or so pilots had flown over us, but I was so relieved to have altitude it really didn't matter.



AUGUST

German Open in Lienz, Austria - The attraction of this competition was to fly in a new place, with some top quality pilots and meet up with a handful of the Nova Pilots Team. The location is stunning with all the flying starting on the Zetttersfeld mountain. The organisation of this event was 1st class, with detailed briefings, well organised logistics (bags picked up by van, then put on cable car to top of mountain) and superb pilot dinners to follow.

The competition produced some interesting tasks that were very racy. I flew reasonably well, but not consistently enough. Immediately after the last task, I had to jump in my van to travel to the Maritime Alps in France for the second round of the British Championships.

British Paragliding Open in St Jean Montclar, France - For most of the field, except the French locals, this was a new location. Being very current from the German Open, I started the week well by leading a good proportion of the first task, only to take a different line to the lead pack (most of whom landed just short of goal), then being forced to land out having watching another pilot fall out of the sky on the Dormilouse ridge. I then spent the next 4 hours with the Police and Fire Service trying to find him in the dense trees, we had to give up when it went dark ! In the following tasks, I was able to fly faster and had two 2nd place finishes. In the last task of the event I missed out on winning the task by 12 seconds, this also demoted my final Championship position for 3rd to 4th, so no podium.



Following on from the competition in St Jean Montclar, Shirl & I had planned to head north to Chamonix. As the weather stayed good, I decided to see how far I could fly the route. Shirl drove the van whilst I flew a direct line about 3000m above her. We stayed on radio, with me directing her to the next point that I was confident I would reach. After flying for 4 hours over amazing mountain areas, it became clear that I would not get much further than Grenoble, thanks to a large storm cloud that was sitting above the Chartreuse valley. I landed just after 17:00, packed up, walked 50m to a nearby road, then Shirl appeared within 5 minutes - 100km AND the best retrieve I have ever had !



PERFORMANCE PARAGLIDERS



Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc (CCC route) - As well as flying, I enjoy the occasional run. This event starts in Courmayeur in Italy, runs through Champex in Switzerland and finishes in Chamonix, France - it's 98km and covers 5600m of climb. It really was without doubt the hardest thing I had ever tackled, taking me just over 18 hours to complete. It really is one of those events that can be enjoyed best, once you've crossed the finish line !

SEPTEMBER

One week after the CCC, I was running again, this time in place of an injured Till Gottbrath. The Trans Alpine Run is a multiday ultra running event which starts Oberstdorf, Germany and continues through Austria and Switzerland for 8 days to the finish in Latsch, Italy. Crazy distance, but strangely addictive !



NOVA IBEX Hike & Fly; Snowdonia Mountains, Wales - Following the success of the 2008 UK Hike & Fly, I decided that it was worth trying again this year, knowing in the back of my mind that the good weather that we enjoyed last year was going to be tricky to conjure up again. 9 keen pilots turned up and enthusiastically hiked up more than 1700m over the 2 days, amazed at how well this little wing flies.



DECEMBER

So to finish off the year, I flew on Boxing Day (26.12.09) at a local coastal flying site that is no more than 20m high! I wore a Santa suit to match my red RADON. I hadn't quite figured how dangerous flying with a long white beard could be, until I turned into wind and it flipped up to cover my face and eyes. A quick landing and a safety pin sorted the beard and I continued flying for as long as my cold fingers could stand it.



**HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL THE NOVA TEAM AND
LOOKING FORWARD TO FLYING WITH YOU IN 2010.**