

Halfway through the Pre-Worlds in Forbes another hang gliding competition got started in northern Victoria. The Corryong Cup is a comp targeted at social and lower-to-average airtime pilots. It is a hill launch comp that runs Floater and Open tasks. Tasks are set to get 30-50% of pilots in goal and the launch line is run to keep launch stress to a minimum. The Floater tasks are generally between 15 and 25 kilometres, and is for Fun's, Malibu's, Stings and the like, while the Open class is for everything else with tasks between 50 and 120 kilometres.

One of the aims of the Corryong Cup is to provide pilots with an introduction to competition in a fun format. Pilots are provided with lots of support to help them get to know their equipment, what to expect when flying, and launch conditions well within their skill sets. The competition is run to be low stress and high fun with doable tasks for the weekend warrior. For want of a better analogy, a lot of goal cherries get popped!

There's an excellent committee that organise this comp, and they spend a lot of time before the comp even starts making sure there'll be heaps of fun. I get it easy as my work only starts once I'm there, I'm launch marshall, and I take a very proactive attitude in providing safe launchable air suitable for the skill of the pilot.

Actually, this year we probably had the worst weather I've experienced since my involvement, and it was still amazing and is my favourite one so far.

For me, the lows were long waits between launchable cycles, some very short launch windows, one day stopped, and one day blown out; and among the highs were one-handed 900 fpm thermals and 10km glides in floaters one day, a 20 km out-and-return for only 2000 feet another, and a 20km glide to goal another. I had a terrific time, even made goal on the first day after taking off last (a 21km glide to goal from 3700' agl and not being last in helps put it up there). I have two flights from the week I want to share, I'll get to them in a minute.

I think this is my fifth year of involvement with Corryong, and I get to fly the tasks after everyone has taken off. Generally that means taking off about 4:30 or later in the arvo. The conditions in the area this time of year are that good that there's thermals from midday until an hour before sunset (8:30ish), when, sadly, it glasses off, how disappointing – not!

While the Pre-Worlds gets a lot of the attention, Corryong is a comp that is quite popular, the 70-odd places available filled in 18 hours when registration opened months ago(!), and the smiling faces and commitments to return next year from pilots is a sure sign the recipe is right.

As an Airborne employee, it's interesting to see who's flying what, I counted approximately 40 advanced, 22 intermediate, and 6 open cross bar gliders. For the Holden versus Ford readers, of Airborne there were 17 advanced, 14 intermediate, 2 novice, and Moyes made up 27 advanced, 3 intermediate, and 3 novice. There were imports as well, being consisting of Wills Wing, Northwing, Seedwings, Icaro and Aeros.

The flying highlights for me are the last two days when I got to test fly a couple of gliders.

On Friday after everyone else had launched I had a two-hour window to set up, fly, pack up, and get cleaned up before going to pick up my wife-to-be from Albury airport 155km

away. Shane Duncan had offered a new Sting 3 168 with mylar top surface for a test fly. I'd flown the 154 mylar and found it had a great sink rate and wanted to know if the 168 was the same.

I weigh-in at 74kg including Christmas lunch, so plus equipment I'm at the bottom of the recommended hook-in weight range. Compared to my topless glider, set up is a lot quicker, the glider having fewer battens and no curved tips to fit.

Standing on launch the glider sits comfortably on the shoulders with a slightly negative static balance, the bar pressure is light. I found it easy to lift and find an appropriate angle of attack for the hill.

Taking off, the glider loaded nicely and I had a nice smooth take-off in switching conditions that the glider flew through with little disturbance.

There is only one launch for the comp and its very reliable. Mt. Elliot is a treed slot at the southwestern end of three ridges forming a bowl approximately 2000' above the valley floor. The launch faces nearly northwest, and the bowl faces west. This means that when launching, there is a dirty great big gully off to the right of take off that somewhere in or along it, air is going up in a fashion that gets me excited.

I launched into a lull at the end of a cycle, turned right and got drilled going across the gully. Got to the ridge on the other side and searched for about five minutes before finding air that was funky, and in another couple of minutes it turned on and started pulsing tight little bubbles of air up past me.

The Sting 3 168 requires more co-ordination than a floater but much less than a topless. To experiment I tried initiating turns just by swinging the front of my body, which yielded little change, but using proper head, body, and feet co-ordination the glider cranked confidently into the bubbles and up I went. Once in the thermal I felt the glider responded well to pitch inputs to vary my bank, and that I could push the bar out a long way to maximise my climb rate in the surges of lift. When I did get tossed out, the glider responded quickly to speed change inputs to swing back around into the lift, not increasing or decreasing too quickly so as to get confused about whether I was flying the air or whether the glider was flying me!

Very quickly I was a thousand below cloudbase and the lift was slowing, I pulled on the vg and the glider tightened up and I headed southwest toward Kangaroo Creek turnpoint from just over 8200'.

Gliding it in varying lift and sink, I found myself in an excellent lift line without much searching, and went with this line pretty much to the turnpoint nine and a half k's away, getting to it at 6500'. I found this a little hard to believe and right here experienced a great dilemma, it was about five o'clock and I knew I had to be on the ground and packed up by 6:30 to be cleaned up and on the road to Albury 115km away to be at the airport in time to pick up my girl. But the sky was soooo good! And I was still so high, and I'd just done one leg of the open task effortlessly! It was a tough decision ignoring the gps and heading off toward the landing zone where the car I'd borrowed was waiting 11 and a half k's away. The glider felt great, the sky was lovely, and I was comfortable as.

The leg to the car was easy, stopping for one top-up climb when after 6 km I was at 4500', I didn't need it, but it was so nice in the sky, and the glider felt so good, I took it for a grand and then glided off.

I arrived over the landing zone still around the 4500' mark at quarter to six and spent the next 15 minutes getting down. Landing the glider was confidence inspiring, there was about two knots headwind, and the glider felt comfortable and responsive flying it in hang position at best glide speed. The round out was typical for an intermediate glider – significantly longer than a floater, significantly shorter than a topless – and the bleed off and signal to flare gradual. The flare window is large, I was late flaring and dropped the left wing a little as a result, it didn't touch the ground and there was no beak, in fact it was a nice landing with one step.

So there I was with a terrific little 20k out and return, for a loss of about 4000'. Sure the day was good but this is a nice glider. The leg back was even a little headwind and it made little difference.

The other thing I liked that was after having packed it up, picking it up and putting it on the car was easy, waay lighter than the topless gliders I'm used to. If I could have only one glider and I was flying inland regularly, the Sting 3 would be my choice.

Alright, this is sounding like an ad, and I'm only halfway. I need to admit again right now that I work at Airborne, and fly in the Newcastle area, but much as I'd like cash for comment, I'm not getting any (but hey bosses, if you're reading this I'm willing to negotiate!).

The other flight I really enjoyed was in the new Fun, the F2. Rick Duncan had thermalled it earlier in the week and encouraged me to have a fly of it, and I'd seen Selmesy sky out in it a couple of days before. I'd had a couple of flights on the proto models and thought they were a little stiffer in roll than the original, so was keen to try the latest incarnation. The old Fun generally sits in bank really well once you crank it up a bit; I've seen Fun's core their way through topless gliders in more than one thermal.

Setting up the F2 is the same as the Fun except it has clip style battens like its topless relative that won the Pre-Worlds. Picking up the glider, the first noticeable thing is the static balance is much improved. The old Fun's are quite tail-heavy and this can catch newbies and smaller-framed people off guard as they start their launch run. The F2 sits more equally on your shoulders, and the pressure to pull the bar in is reduced so the tendency to pop the nose is much less.

On this day there was little to no wind, there had been some loong waits for cycles to come up the face, and it had taken four hours to get everyone was off the hill. Pilots' patience paid off though as the day was on like a train, a very fast train. Reports out in the sky were of long, strong climbs and cloudbase at nine plus grand. Fantastic!

I was lucky and only waited about five minutes for a launchable cycle. It wasn't a fantastic opportunity; it was one knot in my face and about the same on the streamers down the slot. It was consistent though, so I picked up the glider, and with smooth acceleration, launched. The glider lifted very smoothly and was easy to control through the take off and on out of the slot. I turned right and got a surge from the "hot rocks" and

completed a couple of circles but they were thinner and longer than I could steer so dug a little deeper and found strong but disorganised lift in the gully.

You notice changes in lift more quickly in an open cross bar glider, and the F2 responds well to changes in pitch and roll to maximise climb in the surges. At about 500' above launch height, the lift became more organised, and I'd worked my way over the spine of the ridge, where it was going off. It was basically a one-hander thermal at averages up to 900fpm that took me to over nine grand and I felt completely comfortable in it. The old Fun used to sit on a wing tip in thermals, so does this one. That's about as good a compliment I can give for a glider in climb.

Well, what to do? The task for floaters for the day was Mt. Elliot – Mt. Mittamatite – Corryong airport, about 15km. At briefing I suggested it would be a three to four thermal flight for open cross bar gliders. So I went on glide for Mitta turnpoint about 11k's away, but the turnpoint is up on the top of the mountain, about the same as launch height, so I flew off conservatively. The glider felt comfortable on glide and I watched ratios of 6:1 and 7:1 most of the way over, which meant I didn't have to top up, and reached Mitta at ridge height. I could see that I'd make the turnpoint and the goal but Mel was driving the car down and wasn't back yet, and I didn't want to land yet, so I played on Mitta a bit and then went and found another fat thermal that just happened to be marked by a cu with a beautiful dark grey bottom about 5km from Mitta. I grabbed another couple of grand and flew over and around town until I could see Mel's car coming, gave her directions to get to the airport, and then went and found some sink to lose height.

The wind was switching at the airport; I went into hang at about 100' and with my feet down and at best-glide the glider steers well, easily absorbing the variations in gusts that tend to steer you off your intended course. Round out was smooth with speed change consistent and gradual, and the glider sat at trim to min sink for quite a while, allowing me heaps of opportunity to pull my best flare this season. Speaking of flaring, I found the glider rotates very well (I needed it to), and on this flare at least, it dissipated energy extremely well, as I didn't lift noticeably after throwing my arms up. I think Airborne will sell a lot of F2's, it's an excellent glider.

Well I didn't even get to the pack-up area before I had a beer thrust in my hand, and there were many smiling faces as this was goal for both Open and Floater tasks, and the day was that good many people got around both tasks. What a last day of the comp, numerous stories of 9 grand and smooth thousand plus ups, one floater pilot flew his course twice. Sting 3's were getting around the Open task, and one floater even got around the 50km open task.

I'm often guilty of being the last to pack up and this day wasn't much different. There's a very good reason, when the flying's so good, why rush it to end? I had a great flight in a great glider at the end of a great comp and a great beer in my hand.

See ya at Corryong 2013!

Stuie