

Mar 0081 Manilla: Winning Brit team at Manilla (L - R): Mark Graham, Nicky Moss, Steve Ham and Paul Russell



Manilla XC Open

This year's competition (January 2nd - 9th) took an Open Distance format. Unusually, the competition was not fully subscribed due to the early start date and expensive airfares from the 'rest of the world'. 113 pilots showed up to see what the New South Wales countryside had to offer; more than half of them were Aussies seeking to maximise their national ladder points in the absence of the usual cast of international suspects. The days building to the competition saw northerly winds (not ideal), low cloudbases and some storms, making the New Year go with a bang (in the pubs) and a number of very sore heads at the January 1st registration.

Five tasks were scored over eight days, allowing pilots to drop their worst task score. Opinions varied as to the validity of this, as many of the consistent pilots were penalised whilst those with bomb-outs were rewarded and ranked higher than if all tasks had been scored. The debate continues as to whether this format should continue in future years. Many of the top pilots felt that the essence of the Manilla comp had been lost. Re-flights were allowed from any distance and on several days those re-flying after an initial short flight or bomb-out were able to take advantage of improving conditions and achieve greater distance than those who led out from the start.

Over the competition 27,067km were flown in total. Steve Ham took third place overall and was never out of the top four, a great start following his switch of sponsor. Mark Graham won the DHV2 class and was seventh overall. Emphasis was placed on the team event with a prize of Aus \$2,000 in cash. It was very close, but 'England Expects' (Steve Ham, Mark Graham, Paul Russell and Nicky Moss) managed to stay on top for the whole competition, staving off a threat from the two Manilla teams.

Task 1. Howling northerlies in the early morning were not welcome but, in true Manilla style, by 11am they backed off and thermals started to come up the west launch. The day was opened at 12:30 and pilots dribbled off the hill. With a forecast windshear at 1,800m (from 300 degrees below to 120 degrees above!), flight planning was made interesting... and unnecessary. We took off, drifted east, and generally continued in that direction. If you know Manilla you'll know that's not the normal direction to go as there's a lot of country with no roads and no phone coverage. Undeterred, 14 pilots flew over 100km, taking advantage of the rising cloudbase during the afternoon, with Craig Collings flying 167km before hitting the sea breeze! Britain's Steve Ham was third at 134km. The next three days were cancelled due to strong winds.

Task 2. We awoke to thick cloud covering the sky. On the hill at 10am there was no wind. The forecast said it would change, and change it did! As the cloud passed, the wind on launch picked up and the take-off blew out at around 2pm. Most of the field had managed to get away as the sky filled with some very impressive wave. Some had an easy flight, others reported it the roughest ever. Craig Collings won the day again, flying 129km, though with the spread of the field the points were worth less than Task 1. Steve Ham was again third, at 108km.

Task 3. For the first time we awoke to no wind or cloud. The forecast was good and everyone was on the hill for 10am again, but by this time the wind was already strong. Most pilots were launched by 11:30 as the thermals picked up. Conditions were light, but windy from the south-south-east. Local pilot JJ Bastion won the day with 186km, impressive as no-one topped 2,200m on a blue day. Top Brit was Steve Ham again, coming in third at 171km.

Task 4. We awoke to a breezy northerly and wave in the sky. The forecast said light to moderate south-westerly. The day opened at 10am as pilots flopped off the north-east, south-east and west launches. The early pilots went south but hit a southerly wind later in the day. The majority flew south-east and ran into a strong south-easterly. The late pilots went north and flew until the task stopped at 7pm. Cloudbase above 2,800m (and clouds!) made the day easier than the day before. A number of pilots were caught out at the 80+km mark when convergence cloud formed rapidly below them and a strong headwind prevented further progress. Craig Donnell won the day, taking off very late and flying 118km to the north. Top Brit, in fourth position, was Steve Ham at 103km.

Task 5. A strong easterly in the morning was not the predicted light southerly, and we ignored it and went up the hill for 10am. The wind dropped and we started launching from the south take-off. Some pilots went straight north, others flew north of north-west along the Horton valley. Patchy cloud and slow, punchy climbs made for slow going to start with. Towards the end of the day conditions improved, but not enormously. This did not stop Ross Johnstone doing 224km to win the day and the competition. Best Brit was Mark Graham in seventh place at 165km. More than 80 pilots flew personal bests during the comp!

1	Ross Johnstone	New Zealand	Advance Omega 6
2	Craig Collings	Australia	Gradient Avax RSE
3	Steve Ham	UK	Gradient Avax RSE
4	Fred Gungl	Australia	Gin Boomerang III
5	Jinoh Kim	Korea	Advance Omega Proto
6	Enda Murphy	Australia	Advance Omega Proto
7	Mark Graham	UK	UP Summit II
19	Jon Shaw	UK	Ozone Vulcan
23	Emile Van Wyk	UK	Apco Kears
37	Paul Russell	UK	Nova Radon
44	Nicky Moss	UK	Advance Omega 6
53	Pete Taylor	UK	Gradient Aspen
60	Gordon Mucklow	UK	Independence Radical
100	Rob Couper	UK	Gin Bandit

REPORT BY NICKY MOSS



2004 BPCup winner John Firth

British Paragliding Cup

This year's British Paragliding Cup will follow a slightly different format from previous years. A change in the Championships entry requirements means that there are no longer automatic places for the top seven pilots from the previous year's BPCup.

The original concept of the BPCup was to encourage new pilots to try competition flying. Over the years other 'team' comps have slowly taken the lead in this respect. This fact, along with Chris (Calvo) Burns' excellent running of the series for many years, resulted in an increase in the standard of pilots the BPCup was attracting. The open events, especially the Category 2 comps, have attracted many ex-Nationals pilots and we aim to continue the trend this year.

Each BPCup round will have an Open class and we expect seasoned competition pilots flying comp and proto wings to enter (subject to the usual safety documentation for the wing). These pilots will score separately from those wishing to fly serial class wings, the latter being a requirement to win the BPCup title. This format will still allow low-airtime pilots to score well in the Cup, and at the same time be in a position to follow the lead of the top guns and learn from them. We hope to be able to use these experienced pilots during non-flyable time to talk about tactics, GPS use, meteorology and other subjects.

We once again have support from last year's sponsors: Airwave, Gin, Gradient, Mac, Pro-Design, Windtech and Flybubble Paragliding, and Mac are once again offering appreciable discounts for pilots who will fly the Intox in this comp. Airworks will be joining the list of sponsors this year.

By the time you read this, all the dates for this year's rounds and an online entry form should be available at www.bpcup.co.uk. There are discounts for those wishing to do the whole series. Priority will be given to these pilots until the end of March.

REPORT BY GARY JACKS

Mayrhofen racing boot camp

The British Open Championships are going to Mayrhofen in the Austrian Alps at the end of May. This is considered the best time of year for the full-on, fast racing conditions needed to separate the men from the boys in the Alps. New British Squad member Kelly Farina will be running an Advanced XC and Race Training course around his home mountain playground in the week before the comp.

This course will be for competition and experienced XC pilots wishing to learn the area. Kelly, of the Austrian Arena, says, "Having flown and lived here for ten years straight we can say we know our area well. The pace of the course will be fast and the tasks very far reaching, ideal for practicing what might be tasked in the comp."

There will be a discount of 75 euros off the normal price of these courses for pilots who are also taking part in the Open Championships. Austrian Arena's