

no 143: Nicky Moss



Age? 36

Marital status? Happily unmarried to Mark.

Born? Loughborough.

Where do you live now? In the forest just outside Barcelona.

Occupation? While "resting" from my real job as a Chartered Quantity Surveyor I'm trying to get planning permission to build a new house. Everything you've heard about Spanish bureaucracy and mañana is true. Apart from that I make websites.

Previous occupations? Breaking-in young horses on a stud farm. At university I became a dancer in a nightclub - one of those girls that come down from the ceiling on a podium. Real life began when I trained as a Quantity Surveyor, but after ten years counting bricks I was lucky enough to escape to Spain.

How and when did you start flying? I began learning in 1999 when work moved my life to Edinburgh. I was in a new job in a new town, spending every night reading in the pub on my own. I took the advice of the agony-aunts and joined a club, Parapente Ecosse. After that I still seemed to spend every night in the pub but with a great bunch of friends.

Which pilots most influenced you? Mark Graham and Tom Duffin dragged me through EP in spite of my ineptitude. They were my main early influence along with the whole Edinburgh gang - you know who you all are. Ulric Jessop has to be my biggest influence. He is always the one out flying when it is too strong, too windy, too cold or too dark... too much is just enough! Jules Sanderson for repeatedly demonstrating that the impossible is possible, and Judy Leden for sorting out my lettuce (Judy's analogy for my competition mind-set).

When and where was your most memorable flying experience? Before I learnt to fly, an ex-boyfriend thought it would be good fun to tow me along a beach using a climbing rope, his XL Edel Apollo and some big beefy chaps. The boys let go, the boyfriend yelled at me to pull the brakes... and, as the glider stalled, to let go. I hit the wet sand very hard, dumped the boyfriend and vowed never to get involved in such a ridiculous sport. In Manilla last year I was joined by a juvenile wedge-tail eagle who used my glider as a trampoline before flying the next few kms at my wingtip. Another time I was circling in zeros at 2,500m with huge numbers of butterflies caught by the weak thermal.

What is your favourite site in Britain? A small hill in the Scottish Borders called The Kip. Brian Steele and I managed to fly the first XC from there. Blundering into a great thermal, we then drifted over the back in completely different directions as neither of us had a clue where we should be going. The sky was so clear that we could see the Lake District, the Highlands and the North sea. Scotland at its best!

What is your favourite flying site in Europe? Berga in Catalunya, our local site. It's a 300m high plateau with an amazing series of ridges behind leading like stepping-stones into the high Pyrenees. You bottom land at the paragliding school complete with bar, restaurant and swimming pool. Laragne is a close runner-up; it's just the best place for long XC flying.

What is your favourite flying site in the world? It's a hard choice. Manilla is great for easy flying without any big hard mountains to get in the way. Chamonix has a place in my heart after the fantastic "Rhône-Riders" flight last year with Bob Drury and the British squad. Porterville for those incredible climbs off Bumpy and the relief of surviving them! But the winner is just on our doorstep - Castejón de Sos is a paraglider pilot's paradise with incredible scenery and thermals that can whip your boots off!

Although resident in Spain, Nicky is an up-and-coming member of the British Nationals and made the British Team for the recent European Championships in Greece, finishing 10th among the women pilots and best-placed British woman. She is now trying to make a living as a full-time competition pilot, subjecting herself to a gruelling competition schedule. Nicky is rarely seen without her massive Weimaraner dog, Strider. Late last year she flew her new Omega 6 in the Himalayan Open at Bir-Billing where she was top woman pilot. She will spend the rest of the winter season in Australia where defends her Women's Champion title in February. Nicky has just been selected to fly in the British Worlds team in Brazil in March.

Who do you most admire in the sport? Though sadly no longer with us, Jill Borst was an inspirational person and natural pilot. She gave openly to all who knew her and was a joy to be with. Xevi Bonet is an incredible pilot - half man, half bird - and a lovely man who has an encouraging word for anyone who needs it.

What trait do you most deplore in yourself? Obstacity, and talking when I should be listening.

What trait do you most deplore in other people? Negativity. People who criticise from the sidelines but aren't willing to take a chance themselves.

When not flying what do you do for recreation? Barcelona is a great place to get distracted. I horse-ride in the forest and catch up on all the things I should have been doing when I was out flying, like sunbathing.

What is your favourite piece of music? The theme tune from the cartoon *Rhubarb and Custard* and heavy rock, just to annoy Mark.

What is your favourite book? *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho.

What is your favourite film? *Leon*. The story of a crazy kid who wants to be an assassin and an assassin who loves a plant.

What is your greatest fear? Spiders and "wannabe" acro pilots.

What is your perfect idea of happiness? A final glide to goal on full bar without a collapse... we can all dream!

What would your motto be? There are 193 countries in the world but only one sky (thanks to Brendan for that one).

How would you like to be remembered? To be remembered at all would be something, and hopefully it wouldn't be for having done something really dumb.