

Champ Nicky flying high

by Daniel Smith

"I CAME down under my reserve, crashed through the trees and ended up hanging from a branch by one line. I was upside down only three feet from the forest floor."

Paraglider Nicky Moss describes her terrifying accident while competing in Australia

nine months ago.

But the 38-year-old, who's Loughborough born and bred, proved she has a steely determination and last week took the British women's paragliding crown.

Nicky holds a British record in paragliding and has been part of the British Team for the past two years.



But nothing could have prepared her for that fateful day in January.

Strong winds caused her canopy to collapse.

After spiralling several hundred

metres towards the ground she threw her reserve parachute. This slowed her fall but meant she crash landed in a forest - hanging upside down within reach of the ground.

But the cuts and bruises weren't the problem, she had lost her confidence.

This was compounded just a week later when she broke her foot.

"The second accident wasn't so bad," said Nicky. "I just tripped when I was landing really. But it was all wrapped up with my loss of faith in myself. I didn't believe I could still fly."

"After that I was grounded for six weeks and spent most of the summer at home recovering."

As a result she missed several important competitions, but decided to try her luck at the British Open, held last week in Ager in the mountains of northern Spain.

'Deep breath'

Nicky said: "I'm glad I did, I was top woman, which is a great result. It won me a place on the podium. I'm back!"

"I'm very, very happy. After what happened in Australia in January, I really thought about giving up the sport. I went through a period of real introspection, but decided the only thing to do was take a deep breath and try again."

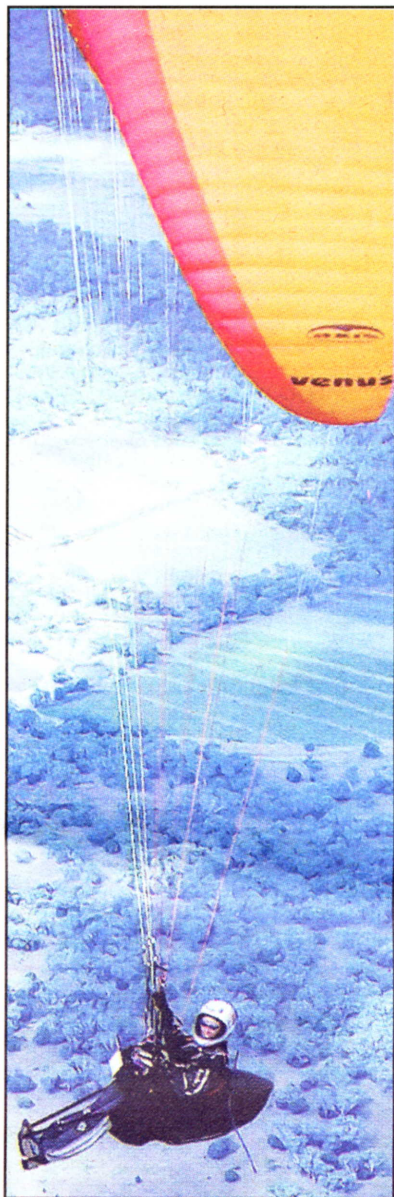
"I'm so glad I did. I flew my boots off in Spain for six days straight."

Nicky has competed in international paragliding competitions for three years.

Last week's competition saw flights of six hours, distances of 100km and heights of 12,000ft. Ninety-four men and women from 11 nations took part.

Nicky started paragliding professionally four years ago after quitting her job as a chartered quantity surveyor.

She now lives in Barcelona and, as well as being part of the British team, she was recently ranked the number one British female pilot in the world.



Paragliders like Nicky can reach 12,000ft. Photo: James Thompson.

Nicky Moss back on terra firma! Photo: Redwing Pictures



Champion Nicky (left) and vice-champion Nia Harland, first and second women at the British Paragliding Open Championship, collect their trophies. Photo: Claire Sanders