

29.10.2012 by Daniel Kofler

Daniel Montejo wins the XC Copa Tocaima 2012 on Astral 7

1st XC Open FAI 2 Copa Tocaima 2012 (Colombia) Daniel Montejo is first again on his Astral 7!



Daniel's report:

After a year of training and hard flying, a bunch of friends and I decided to put together the last XC competition of the year in Colombia. The result was a magnificent event with satisfying results and lots and lots of smiling pilots. We hope this newborn flying site will grow in popularity and who knows, maybe in a few years we'll be hosting a PWC here too!

Coming out of a brutal 'dry summer' season with winds gusting at over 50km/h making flying pretty much impossible, just a week before the competition the weather gods came to peace with us paragliding pilots only to make way to more humid and flyable conditions, allowing us to fly three out of the four day competition. We had a couple of visitors from Mexico, one from the US and the rest of us were all Colombians, most of which had never flown the site before.

We picked Markus Graeber, German, as our Competition Director due to his extensive Sailplane experience and one of the few who has undergone in-depth studies of our local topography and weather conditions. Because the area was new to most, we decided to invite an Air Marshall to the competition: Daniel Velez from Medellín, Colombia, our #1 ranked hang gliding pilot. Daniel was Markus' eyes in the air, making sure that conditions were safe for flying and reporting back on leading gaggle position and any other information worth communicating.

Day 1

The day looked great for our first task. Pilots were more than just excited to fly this site for the first time under such great conditions. Wind decided to take a 180 degree turn but fortunately we had a 'tail-wind' take off prepped for the occasion. After a 25min bus ride we hauled all 60 pilots to the other end of the ridge where a wide and spacious take-off waited for us.

Dark, flat-base cumulus predicted a fast day's race, and indeed it was. A 52km race was made in 58min by the task winner that day. I came in 1st in Sport Class (on my Swing Astral 7) and 6th overall flying at an average of 50km/h. The day overdeveloped quite fast making room for showers and later on storms (see picture on the left).

The last pilots to come into goal were facing winds of over 40km/h, making some gliders stay pretty much like a photograph, absolutely still in the air

Day 2

After another race (by bus) to our 'tail-wind' take-off, and a 50min SP, the race took off for a 72km goal. Conditions started very well on this day but got too stable too fast. The leading gaggle landed about 30km from goal besides the Magdalena River on a beautiful sunset afternoon. I landed just 500m behind the leading gaggle together with a few pilots.

On the right is a picture courtesy of Andrea Jaramillo (1st Place in women's category) while she struggles to stay airborne in weak 1m/s thermals.

Day 3

One could feel the humidity in the air, it just felt heavy. As I walked out of my hotel room, I could see the clouds hanging right there with us on the ground. Nevertheless, as good faith as us paragliding pilots have, we all decided to go up to the take-off and hope for the best. We waited and waited...just short of 1pm, still squinting to each other across the clouds, Markus decided to call it a day. We all went back down to Tocaima and decided to throw a party in Girardot, another small town nearby.

Day 4

This was the last day for many to make up for those last points in the last competition of the year in Colombia, in some cases defining their position in the national ranking. Everyone wanted to fly their best. Markus had been meticulously studying the weather on the previous night and warned us that the day's best conditions would be between noon and 2pm, and that at 3pm everything would simply shut down. And that's exactly what happened. We set a 82km task racing the clock on individual times. People could take off at any time after 11.30am and make their best time to goal. The day wasn't easy and less than 10 people made it to goal. Unfortunately I wasn't there. Not my finest hour but I managed to stack up enough points overall to take 1st place in Sport Class on my Swing Astral 7!

In general the competition was a great success, pilots went back home with great flights, huge smiles and great prizes!

Results

Open

1.

Guillermo Velasquez - NK Icepeak 6

2.

Daniel Vallejo - Ozone R11

3.

Sebastián Pardo - Gin Boom X

Serial

1.

Guillermo Velasquez - NK Icepeak 6

2.

Sebastián Pardo - Gin Boom X

3.

Andrea Jaramillo - Ozone M3

Sport

1.

Daniel Montejó - Swing Astral 7

2.

Felipe Rendón - NK Artik 3

3.

Ricardo Alejo - NK Artik 3

Women

1.

Andrea Jaramillo - Ozone M3

2.

Adriana Chila - MacPara Marvel

3. Paola Cárdenas - Aircross Usport

A little background on Colombian paragliding...

Colombia has become a new destination for paragliding pilots around the world. Why is that? A combination of great weather allowing for 15 days of consecutive extraordinary flying during past Pre and PWC's in Roldanillo and warm, welcoming people, enamored more than a few free flight enthusiasts. In a few months, January 15-26 (2013), 135 pilots from around the world will have the chance to fly for first place in this year's PWC Superfinal in Roldanillo.

A bit about me...



started cross-country competitions this year (2012) in January with my brand new Swing Astral 7. Although Swing is not widely seen in Colombia and people speak of Swing with a fair amount cluelessness, I can assure you more than one eyebrow has been raised recently. During this years Pre-PWC in Roldanillo I had a few R11's look me up after a race and ask me "what on earth is that glider you're flying? you sure it's an EN-C?". I could only smile just to answer: YES.

This year has been good to me as I achieved 1st place Sport Class in 4 out of the 5 Open FAI 2 competitions in Colombia, and 2nd place in the remaining one. My latest victory in Sport Class was this past weekend in the 1st Copa Tocaima flying against the country's best pilots fighting for their last points of the season. This puts the Astral 7 in 1st Place in this years XC circuit Sport Class in Colombia. Congratulations Swing for such a magnificent machine! :) thumbs up!

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