

Sunday, November 7, 2010

[F3J Swiss Winter League in Bellechasse Today](#)

What a great time we had this Saturday!



I met Cédric around 7 AM in Bulle to make the drive together to our first F3J contest in Bellechasse, between Murten and Neuchâtel. Weather looked fine as the forecast said, just a little cloudy and with some WSW wind. Since we were early enough, we stopped at the excellent bakery in Sugiez for some nice morning bread and coffee. Arrived at the contest place around 8:15 AM, we had ample time to unload our gear and discuss with colleagues. The contest field was just perfect, largely broad enough to set up 8 parallel winch corridors 20 m apart, each equipped with 2 winches.



After the 32 pilots were briefed in German and French, it was time to prepare for the first round. I was grouped with Ruedi Schaub, Kurt Strasser and Hugo Pauli. Since Hugo and I did not have any F3J experience, we both were glad to get some very good coaching by Ruedi and Kurt.



As I always expect when I participate to some new soaring discipline, I had to fly first... As the preparation time went by and the countdown went through, I had hardly a clear feeling of all the things I should do during the launch! Somehow my Tanga rose, but then it was too far left and rudder correction was not effective and my left hand slid on the crow stick when I wanted to engage the speed switch for the zoom. Finally, when I was up and running, my machine had about half the altitude of the other gliders and I knew F3J is bone hard stuff... Somehow I could stay in the air for a few minutes, but largely not enough to expect reaching the working time. When I finally made my approach for landing, I braked too early and touched down more than 15 m from spot. Man, F3J is stone hard stuff... At that point, my feeling was that F3F was like cutting warm butter compared to this first F3J flight! But as an encouragement for me, one guy did less points than me during that first round.



Hugo did much better than me with his heavy glider he had converted from electric to motorless during the preceding week. Ruedi and Kurt both did pretty well compared to us newbies, and so we could learn something watching them flying like it was routine. On lane 6, our friends Richard and Markus did also very well.



I hoped doing some better launch during the second round, but it was not very good either, because somehow I did not switch out the start setting during the zoom, so at the end I had neither good speed nor good height. Moreover, I felt the Tanga was slippery with the CG slightly more back that I'm used to fly at the slope in F3F. My time was not very good, as one could expect, though the landing improved a little bit. I could do better than some other pilots during this second round., which was again encouraging. Hugo's flight was not as good as his first, as if his glider would not keep the air. Kurt and Ruedi did not as good as their first flight, but still they assured some good flight times and landings. On lane 6, my friend Cédric did his best flight of the day with his Cyril F3B.

On third round, I finally had some good settings for the launch and flight. Since the wind was getting stronger - about 6-7 m/s on ground level - I decided to grab the small piece of lead in my trousers pocket and stuck it behind the battery of the Tanga. With the CG slightly pushed forward, I had a much better feeling of the machine in all phases of flight and I could reach 9:40 minutes flight time with an acceptably precise landing (for my taste). With this good result, I left 14 pilots behind! Hey, F3J is great stuff, I think I could like it! I must say the F3B machines had no disadvantage during this very windy round, and quite a few light F3J ships had some hard time flying back to base and many landed in the wrong field! In our group, Ruedi did his best result for the day and Kurt made a nice flight too. Theo had still to fight to keep in the air.



It was some time past noon when this third round was over and an interruption was called for dinner. Our friends from our club (GMRF / Groupement de modèles réduits Fribourg) had brought warm vegetable and noodle soup with fresh bread, chocolate bars, cookies and coffee for all participants. The sun was shining and we shared some nice common break time near the forest edge. Many thanks from us all to the staff that prepared all this for us! Such attentions bring a real plus value to any contest, and help all pilots keeping the event in excellent memory.

Fourth round was still quite windy and I could not exploit the lift necessary to keep in the air much more than 5 minutes. But I was not the only one in difficulty during this round, so I was eager to fly the next round! Kurt had no good flight, but Hugo was in his average. Ruedi was able to save points with some better time and landing.



Round five was with a little less wind, but also not so much sun. I had an excellent launch, but I felt lift was poor and I came down fairly rapidly, not able to do much better than half the working time. While Ruedi did his worst flight, Kurt saved some points and Hugo made his second best flight of the day, beating me for the second time. On Lane 6, Richard made a good result, Cédric was average, but Markus had his day's low.

It was time for the sixth and last round of the contest. After a perfect launch (hey, my Tanga is a killer machine during launch, F3J is just pure fun!!! I love it!!!), I was nicely coached by Kurt who acted as my brain while I moved my fingers on the sticks like a (not so) perfect

robot. "Slightly right, stay flat, compensate left, nose into the wind, not so fast, do not turn from the wind, straight, little right, yes like that, got some lift, stay there, slightly right, keep course", etc. After astonishing little time, 8 minutes were over and I was that little black dot far upwind near the sun! Ample time for gliding back, two full turns, back downwind for final, crows down and up again, fly-in little fast, final crows and push to ground. During this last round, with the greatest help from Kurt, I made my best launch, smoothest and most efficient flight, best flight time, best landing, well, best points! Thanks Kurt, you're hired to coach me during my future contests! I could even beat you and Ruedi on that round! Hey guys, F3J rocks!!! In this last round, while Hugo struggled a last time with his glider in thin air, Cédric assured his second best for this day on lane 6 and Richard added one too many overtime flight!



Bellechasse F3J Winter League is over, it's time to pack everything and assemble for the speeches and results (best five of six rounds). In short:

- Rank 1: Renato MARIC, 4978.99 (100.00%)
- Rank 2: Christian MUELLER, 4974.68 (99.98%)
- Rank 3: Andreas BOEHLLEN, 4963.73 (99.76%)

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I am most happy with my 23rd rank of 32 for this first participation in F3J. We had loads of fun, great weather conditions, and a superb flying field. All our club pilots are happy to finish with intact machines. We had ample time to share and discuss about our passion for flying, and everyone experienced some new things and could learn from each other.



At this point, let's say we're all grateful to Bellechasse Penitentiary Institution for letting us fly (and walk) on one of their fields. Let's thank the Soaring Club Bellechasse for the good coordination, for their parking lot, and for their enthusiastic visitors. Thanks very much to all the organization crew, Markus Schneuwly, Kurt Strasser, Reto Schmid, Jean Thévenaz, and all those I forget. Many thanks too for those who prepared and brought us the nice warm lunch. Thanks to Kurt for his great working automated timing system, laptop and printer. A special thank you also for Markus and Ernesto who could arrange the nice souvenir prices. And finally thanks to all pilots from France, Germany and Switzerland who have driven many kilometers to share this first F3J event in western Switzerland. Let's this be the first of many great future F3J (or why not F3B?) events in Bellechasse. Isn't this flying field worth an Eurotour contest?

Cheers all. I wish you nice dreams and a happy Sunday

Reto Blumer; 2011