

**3rd European Women
Gliding championships
1983 St.Hubert – Belgium**



The stage: General F A I Autumn 1982 Conference, Congress Palace in Brussels
Chairman Prince Antoine de Ligne.

The USSR representative is called upon to comment the state of preparations of the next – the 3rd – European women championships 1983 in Oriol.

Immediate reaction: very sorry, we cannot possibly organize these championships, “the buildings will not be ready in time”.

Other candidate countries? Silence. “Maybe the Belgian Aeroclub? The Belgian Federation?” Yes, if the Aeroclub des Ardennes could take charge in St Hubert.

Chairman’s conclusion: coincidence, the Secretary General of this club is up there in the interpretation booth, all right, Belgium will take over. So: Oriol NJET – St Hubert DADA.

That is how the organization of these European championships “landed” in St Hubert where matters had to be settled from scratch in less than 6 months.

As freshly “promoted” director I was lucky enough to find 8 willing collaborators, mainly young and female. What a dedicated team they turned out to be.

May 1983 St Hubert welcomed 24 women pilots.



Bad luck, no delegations of Poland nor of the Czech Republic but for the first time the Netherlands and Yugoslavia were represented. The 4th European championships 1985 being planned in Subotica the Yugoslavian Aeroclub had delegated two very young girls. Against all expectations DDR pilots had been regis-

tered at the very last moment. Indeed, the Belgian Olympic Committee had recently signed a bilateral DDR-Belgium sports exchange programme and had insisted: we count on participation of your European champion Monika Warstat who could not believe her ears when she heard the good news. After Chérence she was indeed told “you shall never participate in the West again”. Team-mate was as usual Irmgard Morgner.



24 participants from 10 countries. On ground director Gill Van den Broeck.

Mainly wet conditions characterized these championships in the heart of the Belgian Ardennes. A whole training week without flying! And still rain at the opening ceremony programmed with a show of exclusively women presentations of aerobatics in gliders and motorized aircraft, grouped parachuting, comedy sketches... it all literally fell in the water and the poor radio-controlled witch model sadly “landed out” soaking wet after some 2 meters gain of height! Another kind of “landing out” was due to a navigational error of the bus driver, bringing the women pilots and their crews to the magnificent castle Beloeil, by many considered as the most beautiful of Belgium. They arrived with some delay and in these impressive surroundings Prince Antoine de Ligne treated his guests to a memorable reception – kind of compensation for his surprising decision at the 1982 General Conference that Belgium should take over from failing Russian organizers of Oriol.

But even rain must once come to an end. While the Federal Republic of Germany was still suffering from tidal waves and France could not keep the Seine within its banks, this **Whitsunday** in St Hubert triangle speed tasks - even if modest - could be set and were achieved by 4 pilots in the 15 m class. In standard class 4 ladies had to land out in pouring rain. Things got more com-



DDR crew and director Gill Van den Broeck.

plicated for Irmgard Morgner (DDR) who landed her Jantar on a field... in FRANCE! And the DDR team did not have the necessary visa.

Again St Hubert improvised, the Belgian team captain took an empty Jaskolka trailer – should be adaptable for the Jantar glider, also Polish – and personally saved Irmgard from her French predicament as if she was a Belgian pilot, without too much custom fuss. But please, do not talk.

The sky on **Whitsun monday** offered a few cumulus clouds, which did not keep their promises and sent various participants to the Belgian cows. But the struggle went on in order to reach the requested minimum of 100 km. This hard labour paid, both classes had their validation. To recover forces after this demanding competition day pilots then had more time than they cared for. A persistent low pressure, showers, rain and more rain...

Only a **rich alternative programme** could bring some compensation and consolation for the non-flying days. The grottoes of Han, a much appreciated organ recital – Polish pilots were not present but at least Chopin was! Much applause was the well deserved reward for the adventurous skipper of the Williwaw (- the boat which had just succeeded the North passage East-West in North America) illustrating and commenting on his memorable trip.

Another small present: pilots were offered hairdressing treatment free of charge in this archiepiscopal town of St Hubert.

Not to forget discovery of the local gastronomy – crews had occasion enough to have a taste of this in the airfield cantina, where our friendly Josette enjoyed a first class reputation – until to-day nothing but praise for her star-menu: chick-

en with young small peas in tarragon sauce... Hm!

Time and occasion enough also for the organization of the **babajaga ceremony** in the usual friendly atmosphere, appreciated by pilots, crews, amused onlookers and of course by the newly enthroned witches.



Old friends, from left to right: Teresa Toivonen (SWE), Monika Warstat (DDR), Geogeo Litt (BEL), Irmgard Morgner (DDR), Maria Bolla (HUN), Ludmilla Klueva (SU). On her knees director Gill Van den Broeck.

After 6 non flying days we could finally fly again.

At least that is what we thought. Chief meteorologist André Labieuse – by lucky coincidence also socialist burgomaster of St Hubert – announced tempting cumulus clouds and warmer temperature – BUT the oozy airfield was much too muddy for tow planes to pull gliders up in the air. Would this really mean staying another day on the ground? Moment, moment... Wasn't my jurist niece member of the cabinet of our Belgian Defence Minister? Urgent phone call "Edith, you have three quarters of an hour to get us permission to use the military **Nato airfield** adjoining our gliding airfield... or else you will no longer be my godchild." But aunt Gill, you really ask the impossible...

How surprised people were and how proud I was one hour later at briefing: "Dear ladies, please hurry, put your glider on the trailer and follow my car; we shall take off from the concrete NATO runways next to our airfield. WE DO FLY!"



Launch from NATO airfield.

So a task was set, something less than 200 km but anyway, up they went! In standard class the day victory of Helmi Lebok allowed her to rise from 9th to 4th overall ranking. In 15 m class Gisela Weinreich and Gudrun Emde rose to top placing. Team flying in federal German ranks? Rather loose information team flying, as Marlis Kall called it. Whatever it was, they did not have to wait any longer for success, they had become assured and trustworthy. Marlis Bertram got solidly settled in the lead in standard class, where the East block competitors had a hard job to make their Jantars keep pace with the LS 4 gliders.

The pilot with the best possible expert adviser? Without any doubt Swedish Teresa Toivonen, her crew was of the highest level: husband multiple world champion Ingo Renner. One day I asked his opinion on an organizational matter, his answer: but Gill, I am only here as the helper of my wife the pilot. Advice to Teresa, yes, but in the air SHE was on her own and like her opponents she had to decide either to try to keep whatever position she had – if that seemed satisfying enough – or take risks and aim for higher ranking.

Large tasks remained impossible with the freakish weather – and what was happening on the 5th contest day was as thrilling as a Hitchcock film. Both classes were set the same task: St Hubert – Beauraing – Stenay – St Hubert. All pilots were forced to land on the second leg of the imposed triangle? Only two out landing reports were missing: Gisela Weinreich and Geogeo Litt struggled for every meter to reach Stenay – exactly the 100 km mark and thus deciding upon validation or not of the task. Alas, the strong wind kept pushing them back. On St Hubert airfield it rained cats and dogs, everybody took shelter and listened on

the radio how this nerve-racking flight of both Titans was developing. At 7 p.m Gisela announced she was still flying with Geogeo. Then nothing. Both landed out. Exactly where? Now accurate measuring. Late in the evening we assumed Gisela Weinreich had reached 100 km, Geogeo Litt just a stone's throw away. To be absolutely sure I requested our National Geographical Institute to check thoroughly, they gave the final answer: 101,9 for Gisela, 99,9 km for Geogeo (At that time according to the rules, one pilot having reached 100 km is enough to validate the day task, everybody else having proportional points). For **Gisela Weinreich** this was the decisive step on the way to the European title as successor of Marie-Françoise Gavaret who became 4th, all the more so because Geogeo Litt made a serious navigational error next day. She could forget the title but she also had to let **Gudrun Emde** pass her for the silver. However, with her bronze medal **Geogeo Litt** stopped the German team to occupy the whole podium of the 15 m class.



15 m class ,from left to right: Gudrun Emde (GER) 2nd, Gisela Weinreich (GER) 1st, Geogeo Litt (BEL) 3rd.



Standard class , from left to right: *Maria Bolla (HUN) 2nd*, *Marlis Bertram (GER) 1st*, *Helmi Lebok (GER) 3rd*.

In standard class silver “Bomber” Maria Bolla prevented a complete German triumph, **Marlis Bertram** was well ahead and **Maria Bolla** could not be threatened any more by **Helmi Lebok**.

We waved a special good bye to both Yugoslavian girls, we were indeed to see them again, probably, in 1985, organization was indeed foreseen in Subotica!

Results 3rd European Championships St Hubert

OFFICIAL RESULTS FAI 15 MT				
	NAME	COUNTRY	GLIDER	POINTS
1	Gisela Weinreich	Germany	LS3a	2587
2	Gudrum Emde	Germany	ASW20	2370
3	Geogeo Litt	Belgium	Mini Nimbus	2299
4	M.F.Gavaret	France	ASW20	2170
5	A.M.Bertels	Belgium	ASW20	2069
6	Maryvonne Guitton	France	LS3a	2027
7	Teresa Tolvonen	Sweden	ASW20	2001
8	Claire Couture	France	ASW20	770
9	Lia de Jong	Holland	LS3a	589

OFFICIAL RESULTS FAI STANDARD CLASS				
	NAME	COUNTRY	GLIDER	POINTS
1	Marlis Bertram	Germany	LS4	2439
2	Maria Bolla	Hungary	Jantar st	2351
3	Helmi Lebok	Germany	LS4	2281
4	Christi Kiewitter	Germany	LS4	2258
5	Marles Kall	Germany	LS4	2242
6	Heidi Goetz	Switzerland	LS4	2223
7	Eva Daroczy	Hungary	Jantar st	2198
8	Anne-Marie Pinon	France	Pegase 101 a	2067
9	Monica Warstat	Germany	Jantar standard II	2040
10	Tamara Zagainova	Russia	Jantar standard II	1785
11	Irmgard Morgner	Germany	Jantar standard II	1726
12	Francine Hannhart	France	LS4	1707
13	Ludmilla Klueva	Russia	Jantar standard II	1674
14	Milena Cestnik	Jugoslavia	DG100 Elan	1496