



British Junior Gliding Team

December 2015 update





We are World Champions!

Tom Arscott – World Champion

Sam Roddie – Bronze Medallist

Matt Davis – 10th

Mike Gatfield – 15th

Team GB – Bronze Medallists

The competition lowdown

Wow. What more can we say really? Three crazy, amazing weeks flying in Australia, and we're coming home with a new Club Class Junior World Champion in the shape of Tom Arscott! Not only that, but Sam Roddie brings home a Bronze medal, and we even added Bronze in the Team Cup to the collection.

Together, we did roughly 70 flights, totalling 320 hours flying time, and battled it out over around 26000km. Records were broken, stories were created, and history was made. We couldn't have asked for much more when we set off on our little Australian adventure way back in 2014.

We want you to be part of it. To tell you our story. Sit back and hold tight, this could be a long ride!

A year in the making

Roll back to the end of 2014. Another competition year was just drawing to a close in the UK. After a successful Squad training programme throughout the year, the Junior Team was selected as the winter drew in. Already plans were falling into place – on site accommodation at Narromine had been booked, container planning was well under way, sponsorship plans were being put into action. All of us started the quest for new gliders! Matt switched to Standard Class and was very kindly allowed to borrow Will Chappel's LS8 for the competition (thanks also to Jay Rebbeck, Rich/Jez Hood, Russ Francis, Andy Cockerell, and Steve Pozerskis for letting me train in their gliders throughout the year). Sam swooped in and borrowed Matt's Cirrus. Tom and Mike showed great commitment and bought themselves a Cirrus and LS8 respectively.

Still, there was plenty to plan. Would we team fly? What competitions would we fly? Where would we train? What cars would we drive? Where would we get trailers from? How could we afford it?! This competition truly was an exercise in planning to make sure we even arrived on Day 1 ready to go...

The million dollar container question

Our worst nightmare was playing out in front of us. Problems with the container meant we, rather ludicrously, actually lost track of it for a while. Shipping companies were telling us different things, and we had no idea if our container would actually turn up in Australia, let alone on time. There were visions of us parking industrial quantities

of washing machines on the runway. In addition, M9 had been in Australia for nearly a year, and the Australian authorities wanted it out. Some pleas to the right people managed to get us a last minute extension, and we solved some trailer legality issues just in time to be able to put some plans in place to transport it the 12 hours to Narromine. Ben Hughes was tasked with this mission through the outback as he was also retrieving Michael Scutter's car for our use for the competition – thanks Michael.

We flew out to Sydney with the latest ETA of our container being November 20th, coincidentally the date of our arrival. Just before departure we were hit with the news that the container had been flagged for a full unpack. We were told this meant that it could take seven days to get to us at Narromine, putting its arrival time barely before the start of the competition, and well into the practice period. Backup plans initiated, we had gliders hired from across the country to let us practice. We were still lacking most of our equipment but we jumped in and got a few days flying under our belts.

On one of the practice days some good news filtered through on the radio – the container was in Sydney! A plan was prepared and the two Ben's were dispatched to marshal it through its agriculture inspection the next morning. Alas, more issues. The piece of paper in the official man's hand demanded a full unpack, despite them being able to look around fully inside. A long day of unpacking and repacking in a Sydney warehouse looked inevitable before our luck changed. It turns out Benedict knows a girl who works in the Australian Prime Minister's office. A couple of phone calls later, a new agriculture officer was on site and had signed off the paperwork in record time! As much stuff as possible was loaded into the Land Rover and the gliders were put on a lorry for the final leg of their long journey – success!



Practice makes perfect

Blue days. Lots and lots of blue days in the practice. We soon learnt a couple of things about the Australian weather. One, it absolutely kills you to get low. The wind shear made the thermals incredibly narrow, and destroyed average speeds in the Standard Class. The Club Class, being lighter, were still able to find the cores and didn't suffer as much. Our second observation was that the Club Class were hugely quick as a pair in the blue. They were leaving the bigger groups of gliders behind with ease, picking off the best thermals and centring them quickly.

In the Standard Class, we didn't gel as well when pair flying, so weren't able to drop other gliders in the blue. We therefore decided that we would be forced to play the 'gaggle' game in the blue, working with other gliders to mutually help each other.

On the days we had with cumulus we knew we were as fast as any other pilots in the competition. The practice Assigned Area Tasks (AAT) showed that our tactics were much better than other teams. The information provided to us by team base was accurate and reliable. Confidence was high. Despite the upsets, we were confident that we could do well here. Things were finally falling into place.

The Grand Opening

Matt: This was it. Day 1 had come around quickly. Despite the obvious high cloud over the airfield when we awoke, the weather forecaster had obviously forgotten to open the curtains and was predicting blue skies and sunshine. Rather predictably we launched into a weak sky with ground temperatures up at 38°C. There was also a rather sporting crosswind which made for some very interesting launches. Mike and I were near the front of the grid and eventually climbed up just in time to hear that the Australian prodigal son Matthew Scutter couldn't stay in the air and had been forced to land back. Rather conveniently the day was then immediately cancelled. In all seriousness the weather was pretty marginal so the correct decision was made.



Day 1 – Take 2

Matt: The weather from the day before had cleared through leaving a cooler blue day. Cool in Australia = low, so we were (only) expecting thermal tops around 6000ft. With the best part of the day forecast to be later, Mike and I hung on and were two of the latest starters. We unfortunately didn't learn our lessons from practice and had an awful start, immediately down low scrabbling round for climbs. It took us an age to get connected again, listening to the Club Class happily cruising along in the better weather at altitude. Despite eventually running well we couldn't pull the speed back and ended up near the back of the pack, losing 240 points on the leaders. From that we swore we really really weren't going to get low again!

Tom: In the Club Class, we were also amongst the latest starters in our class, setting off on a 3 hour AAT. We managed to make a start on our own, and ran well on the first leg. After pushing fairly deep in the first sector, I unfortunately caught a bubble on the way to the second sector, which separated us vertically by about 1000ft. A cunning plan for me to push slightly deeper than Sam in the next sector, and then come back together at the same height, was foiled by Sam coring a strong climb behind me and bit of miscommunication. This meant we had to fly the remaining in to wind leg alone, with the day starting to tail off. This probably cost us a bit of time, but 8th and 9th on the day with 960 points was a good solid start to the competition.

The recovery

Matt: We knew consistency would be the way to win this competition, so we set out to start getting some good hauls of points. Flying round with the gaggle meant some people would beat us by starting slightly later each day. However the chances were these people would be different each day so we would beat them in the long run.

Day 2 was a 480km task with a short window. We knew we had to start almost as soon as we could to be in with a chance of completing the task. Mike and I bit the bullet and led everyone through the start line in blue conditions, pushing hard to reach the cumulus near the first turn. When we did we accelerated, getting ourselves to the front of the gaggle and catching the Germans who had started earlier. From there we led round the second turn and headed for home. Still about 150km from home and with the day feeling like it was dying, a field caught alight in front of us. The gaggle dived for it. Those who got there earliest climbed at around 12 knots (1200ft/minute) up to around 9000ft. Suddenly we were nearly on glide for home. A couple of top ups and we set off, all flopping back onto the airfield pretty late in the day. A solid points haul for us and just what we needed.

Tom: With a task of 'only' 350 km for the Club Class, we could at least have a little more choice over our start time. We were keen to build on our solid result from day 1 and therefore decided not to run the risk of starting too late.

Unfortunately, after making an early start, we didn't have the best of runs in the blue conditions on the way to first turn point and were therefore caught up by several gliders who had started five minutes after us. Nevertheless we pushed hard for the developing cumulus over the hills in the East and flew the remainder of the flight with the Germans despite them flying higher performance gliders. 5th for myself and 7th for Sam on the day felt slightly frustrating, but the good points haul brought us up to 5th and 6th overall.

Day 3

Matt: Day 3 was back to a completely blue day, with a 3 hour AAT for both classes. Mike and I caught a good thermal in the start zone that went much higher than the ones before, allowing us to easily catch up with some earlier starters. From here we tried to go a bit further than the others in each sector, then let them do the hard work finding the next climb and chase them down each leg. Unfortunately Mike missed a bubble from just below me that let me catch a good climb and execute the plan to perfection and a day win. Just goes to show how much luck comes into this sport sometimes.

Tom: Similarly to day 1, we started late in the Club Class, having spent what felt like an eternity in the start sector waiting for other gliders to get going. A nice high start combined with a couple of strong climbs caught us right back up with some earlier starters before we even reached the first sector! The conditions were forecast to be much stronger in the second and third sectors, so we turned short and set off in search of the better climbs. With climbs starting to peak at 7500', the speed was good until we turned for home, when the day seemed to start switching off a bit earlier than expected. This cost us a bit of time as we took a few weaker climbs on to glide. But 6th and 7th with 975 points for the day put us in to 2nd and 3rd overall, with our confidence slowly growing with each flight.



Day 4

Matt: Day 4 was a bit more of the same, but with some cumulus on track down the first leg. Mike and I were quite confident we could get a jump on people by being the first into the cumulus so we led the gaggle out and pushed hard for the first climb. Annoyingly the gaggle got a slightly better climb behind us and reeled us in. From here we had to think a bit tactically so flew a bit further in the first sector to gain ourselves some advantage. Some approaching high cloud split the gaggle on the next leg. Mike and I pushed under the shadow to some climbing gliders and were able to get a bit more distance on the majority of people. We then got ourselves back into sunshine and climbed as high as we could before setting off back across the shadow. The gaggle made a mistake here and got low under the shadow which meant we cruised over the top of them on final glide. Another day in the top 10 and right up there in the points.

Tom: With the Club Class start line just extending in to the cumulus to the East, the entirety of the Club Class sat under a handful of small clouds, with nobody wanting to make a start on the 3:30 AAT. However, with the increasing threat of large bands of high cover cutting off the second sector, we eventually made a break for it, only being followed by the two Italians. The cumulus extended for much of the first leg, with good climbs to 10,000' over the hills. Once the clouds stopped, we pushed a bit deeper before turning and heading west. Andy had been closely monitoring the progress of the top cover from team base and his predictions turned out to be spot on. Sam and I were able to sneak in and clip the second sector, just on the edge of the cloud shadow, before heading north to the final sector. Annoyingly I hit a bubble and climbed away from Sam, so we separated slightly on this leg, with the Italians still blindly following Sam and refusing to help him out at all. I ended up pushing deeper in the final sector which put me on a different track home to Sam. With bands of high cloud now casting shadow over the last leg, the

climbs seemed to become few and far between. We both got low, Sam still with the Italians in his shadow, but managed to hop along on to a glide to finish 25 minutes over time. I ended up 2nd for the day, with Sam finishing 9th. Once again, the flight had slightly slipped away from us on the last leg. Still, we were now 1st and 4th in the overalls.

Day 5

Matt: One of those days we will talk about for a long time. The forecast looked good but the 610km task raised some eyebrows, as again we were a bit short on weather window. The majority of the gaggle sat in the start zone waiting

for each other until Mike and I led them out towards some epic looking cumulus on a range of hills to the South. In the next 210km, we took three thermals. 160kph to the first turn, running an incredible convergence line around 12000ft with about 15 other gliders. It was one of those moments that takes our breath away. On the way back we diverted off track to the same convergence line which also lead us past another stubble fire. This detour caught

us up with the leaders and we led the pack home. I only just squeaked into the top 10 at 152kph!

Over the last four days I'd averaged 976 points. I was back up to 4th and less than 100 points off the lead now. Mike and I were getting in a groove and we were sitting pretty.

Tom: A mere 450 km task for the Club Class which frustratingly only allowed us to use the very edge of the booming cumulus conditions that the Standard Class boys got to play in, before we had to head back North in to the blue. When it was good though, it was very good and we ran well together both in the cumulus and the blue. We managed to stay together as a pair for the whole flight and came in 6th and 7th for the day with an unhandicapped and unwindicapped speed of 125 kph! Not bad for a dry glider from the early 1970's and by far my fastest ever cross country. With Sam and I up to 3rd and 1st overall, things were going well, but the pressure was starting to ramp up.

Day 6

Matt: Chapter 1 of 'The Vario Saga'. We launched into a near carbon copy of the first flying day, with a 4.5 hour AAT set. Lots of high cloud and strong winds meant it took us over an hour to really climb up well. We had a good start behind some fast gliders and set about chasing them down. I felt the surge as I pulled into the first climb and the altimeter was racking up height, yet my vario was stubbornly telling me I was going down. I knew that this would make it difficult for me and decided to do damage



limitation, sticking with other gliders wherever possible. Unfortunately it seemed no one was in a rush, and Mike and I were forced to lead the gaggle on more occasions than I would have liked. With only a mechanical vario my thermal finding process was slowed down and we struggled to drop the slower gliders. Eventually the weather caught up on us and the day rapidly died. Without a way for me to tell the average climb rate I was reliant on gliders around me to make smart decisions. Devastatingly the gaggle split in two, with one group a thousand foot above in the last climb of the day being able to squeak home, and the rest of us landing short. I was absolutely gutted. I'd lost 350 points and had dropped right down the leader board.

Fortunately the next day was a rest day so we set about fixing my vario. After spotting no obvious problems we swapped the instrument over to a new one which was doing its job perfectly. Or so we thought...

Tom: The organisers seemed insistent that it was going to be the day of days, and refused to look out of the window at the mass of thick, fast moving high cloud. For us Club Class guys, they finally backed down and dropped us back to a C task. Unfortunately this was still 360km, away from the lovely blue skies and cumulus to the East, and in to the



increasingly thick high cover to the south and west. The start gaggles were becoming increasingly bad and by 14:40 we were forced to lead a gaggle of about 15 gliders out, otherwise we risked running out of day and getting thrashed by the Polish who had managed to escape early. It turned in to a pretty frustrating flight with Sam and I getting separated early on and getting caught by the

gliders that inevitably started a few minutes after us. After spending most of the flight leading a gaggle with the Germans, I unfortunately missed a climb on the final leg and watched everybody that had been behind me, including Sam, fly over the top and on to final glide. The last 40km were very smooth as we slowly crept home with the sun completely disappearing. Still, a reasonably solid result on what was a very tactical day, with Sam finishing 6th and me 15th, putting us in to 1st and 2nd overall going in to rest day. The pressure was most definitely on now!

Day 7

Matt: *The first climb on Day 7 showed that I had the same vario problem. I noticed I had a long term average which seemed to be about right, so if I could find the climbs at least I knew if they were good or not. With thunderstorms forecast we decided there was no time for me to land and troubleshoot the problem further so Mike and I set off on our 2 hour AAT, again in a good position behind some quick gliders. However it quickly became apparent that my instrument problems were a massive handicap. We just could not find the good climbs in an incredibly frustrating sky which was mixed up by the strong winds. A near last place result, but thankfully a devalued day so just over 200 points dropped.*

By now I wanted to replumb the entire glider. I couldn't fly another day with no vario – it was destroying me. A couple of hours searching, unplugging connections, scratching heads, but finally we found our problem. The tie down gear which I neatly stowed down the back at the very beginning of the competition had come dislodged and was pinching a tube. Such a small thing causing so much confusion left us all feeling totally stupid. We couldn't do much but laugh!

Tom: Day 7 was also a tough day for the Club Class. With the promise of storms in the afternoon we were set a 2:30 AAT taking us SW and then North. There were plenty of cu in the sky but we soon discovered that someone had turned them all off, particularly in the first sector where we pushed much deeper than everybody else. It ended up being a horribly frustrating flight for us as we watched our average speed disappear as we got low and had to take weak climb after weak climb. We came in well off the pace with 97kph, which cost us in the overalls bringing us down to 2nd and 3rd overall and more importantly, closed the gap to those below us.



Beginning of the end

Matt: Day 8. In the Standard Class our competition was pretty much over. We set out to enjoy the rest of our time, push hard, and get ourselves as far back up the leader board as possible. Another good day was forecast so we had our biggest task of the competition with 630km. Launching from the back of the grid, Mike and I took ages to climb up and a lot of people had started before we even reached cloudbase. Eventually we got there and set about tracking them down, running some big streets at

12000ft into wind. We didn't push hard enough to get a big climb before the into wind turn and ended up spending too long in weaker climbs. On the next leg we were crosswind so tried staying high to keep connected with the clouds. Once at altitude we could nail climbs and were cruising along nicely. The final turn was in a big hole, and forced us into a long glide in and out of it. Mike and I arrived back at the good weather quite low and got separated trying to climb back up. From there individually we couldn't find the stronger climbs needed to really push the pace up and got a bit of a hammering by the winners who went 17kph quicker at 158kph. Incidentally that is apparently the fastest ever speed in Australia for a task over 500 km, so that just goes to show the standard of these Junior pilots!

Tom: In the Club Class, we were hoping that the day's 500 km task would see us close back up to the top. The sky looked epic, although as the standards also found, the clouds were so big that it took a lot of searching to find the climbs that we needed under them. Unfortunately the flight just didn't fall in to place for us. We didn't have a great start and it then felt like we were constantly out of synchronisation with the clouds, which seemed to start falling apart just as we reached them. After pushing quite hard around the first turn point we got stuck below 5000' for a while. Although this would be a luxury in the UK, it was a long way below cloudbase and made it very difficult for us to find the strong climb we needed to get back up again. By the end of the flight I felt like we were finally getting the hang of it, but the conditions had been very different to anything I had experienced before. 17th and 19th on the day left us slightly deflated and in 2nd and 4th overall

Day 9

Matt: Day 9 was another day with a short window, and a 390km task. Mike and I now needed some tricky weather and big points differences to get ourselves back in contention. Some strong winds preceding a front enabled me to climb in shear wave before the start and escape on track before the gaggle with a couple of Poles. We soon bumped into some exceptional weather and raced round the next 250km before turning back towards grey skies and misery. I milked all I could out of the last decent looking cloud and set off on a long, slow, 110km final glide into a stiffening headwind. Amazingly I made it back, although annoyingly the Poles found a good climb behind me to come home faster and steal another day win away from me. We knew the other gliders were about 40km behind us so we waited to see how they'd fare getting back into the front, which was now producing rain all around the airfield. We waited and waited and the sky looked bleaker and bleaker. There was a total of 4 finishers over the two classes. I thought this was my chance to pull some big points back. Just as we were all giving up hope and nearly every trailer had set off, a group of gliders emerged from the gloom and landed back. Mike was among them. They were 2 hours later than us! I'm still amazed how they even managed to stay in the air that long, let alone make it into a 30kt headwind. Annoyingly the scoring system conspired against me, and despite beating the next pilot by 56kph I only got 60 more points! Apparently we had simply gone too fast which made the scoring system treat our speeds as an anomaly and tighten the points up. Oh well, another story to tell from the competition that keeps on giving.



Tom: With the Club Class also launched on a 390 km task, it became apparent before we had even started that it was unlikely anybody would be completing the task and we should try and fly as far as possible. The flight really was a flight of three halves. The start was low, blue and generally hard work with lots of gaggles. Sam and I finally led a

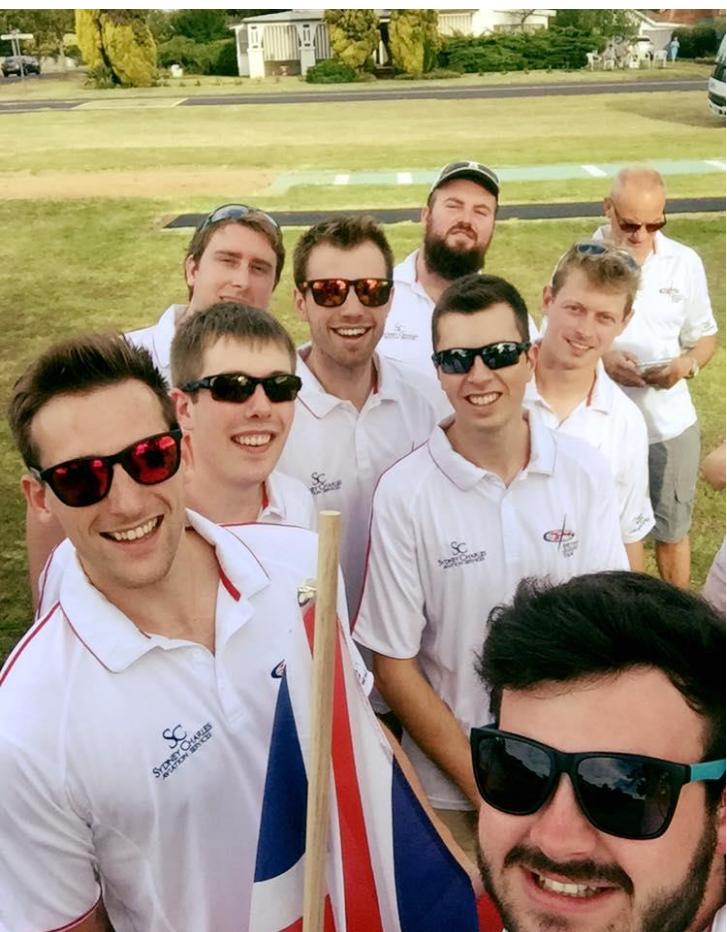
gaggle of about 20 gliders out of the start line and started battling our way in to wind. After the first turn point, conditions started to improve nicely and next thing I knew, I was climbing in 13 knots to 13,000 under solid cumulus. That will be the Gold Height done then! Sam unfortunately missed a bubble and dropped behind on this leg, and so I found myself out



front, leading the pack. Upon turning for home, the sky looked very different ahead, with the top cover from the front starting to cut off the sun. We had needed to travel further East than the Standard Class which meant we had even less sun on the ground and with the wind steadily increasing it soon became obvious that an outlanding was likely. Sam landed about 80 km out but somehow I managed to keep creeping in to wind, taking anything I could get with no sun on the ground and it starting to rain. Within sight of the airfield, my luck finally ran out and I was forced to land in a field some 15 km from home. However, with only one Club Class glider completing the task, I found myself in 3rd for the day with 942 points, with Sam coming in 23rd.

Day 10

Matt: The final day came around and we were off on a 360km task. Mike and I wanted to go out with a bang and decided to try and fly with the Poles, who we anticipated would be going all out to get themselves on the podium. In the end a tricky day ended up punishing people for pushing ahead, so the gaggle sat back and went frustratingly slow. We came home in touch of the leaders but for us it was a bit of a damp squib. The main excitement came from listening to the Club Class' brilliant will-they-won't-they tactical flight trying to beat the Germans. Once the results came in we fired up the old Queen classic and set off on a victory lap of the airfield! What a huge performance they put in on that last day to bring home some very well deserved medals.



For us, I think it's a story of what could have been. Without my vario issues I like to think we would have been fighting for a podium. I certainly don't feel like that would have been beyond us – our flying was definitely good enough. However it's all very good dealing in 'if's', and the reality is a 10th place finish in my final Junior Worlds. Despite everything, I can honestly say this was some of the most fun flying I've ever done with a great group of people. Thank you all – you know who you are! Also a massive shout out to our sponsors, without whom we wouldn't have been at the competition.

Tom: The last day had arrived. The Club Class were set a 3 hour AAT, with blue conditions up to about 7000 ft forecast. Big sectors, close together in a relatively short AAT can be a recipe for a bit of a lottery, and there was a lot to be gained or lost on the last day. With myself sitting 80 points off the lead in second place, and Sam in seventh, we discussed tactics a lot in our usual pre-flight team briefing and decided that we would try and fly our own flight, knowing that we had flown very well as a pair on the previous blue days. The plan was to try and start on our own, but if we did end up with the Germans, to stick with them to ensure we secured a podium finish. The start proved to be vital. We knew that if the

Germans found us, they would simply wait until we started, and then follow us.

So, with a bit of help from the Standards (thanks Mike and Matt!), we went and hid about 25 km from the airfield, the other side of the Standard Class start line, whilst Andy and the crews kept a close watch at the airfield for any Club Class starters. As our pre-determined latest start time approached, we snuck back towards the airfield, and managed to make a start relatively undetected. Unfortunately, we caught up with the Germans, who were surrounded by a massive gaggle of gliders, after only 20km or so. Although it turned out they had started about a minute before us from the other end of the line, we knew that sticking with them would mostly likely secure a second place finish, but no better than that.

It was here that we made the pivotal and risky decision to hang back a bit, and then make a split from the gaggle. We were confident that we could fly faster as a pair in the blue, so we went for it, taking a more northerly track whilst thankfully everyone else stayed with the painfully slow gaggle. After a long glide, Sam cored 6.5 knots which put us well out of reach of the gaggle and we pushed deep in to the first sector before turning to align ourselves with the Standard Class task. We then ran with some of the Standard Class gliders, heading north for another 50 km or so before we stumbled across a large gaggle of Club Class gliders. YES, it was the Germans again! After some communication with team base, Andy told us that it appeared they had turned much shorter than us in the first sector.

We ran with the gaggle, again at a rather slow pace with nobody willing to push on, until they all decided to turn for home. In order to squeeze as much advantage as we could, we decided to push just another couple of km's in to the turn, before chasing them down all over again. Five minutes later we were back with the gaggle and Andy came on the radio to say the speeds looked good and our best bet was to just follow them home. This turned out not to be so simple! We managed to miss a bubble in one of the climbs and fell off the bottom of the gaggle. Soon we were down below 2000 ft and thinking that we might have thrown the day away. We took a couple of weak top up climbs but still had to keep pushing forwards uncomfortably low. Finally we cored a solid 4.5 knots and took this on to a very skinny final glide. As we approached the final turnpoint, we came over the top of a few thermalling gliders. OH YES, it was the Germans again! Somehow we had managed to catch them back up, and as we turned for home the question was whether we had done enough to bridge the 80 point gap to first place. With the gliders off the field, the traces submitted, and everyone pacing nervously, we waited... BOOM! 2nd and 3rd for the day, but more importantly 1st and 3rd position overall, plus a bronze medal in the team cup!

I can honestly say I've never been so happy. After 10 gruelling days flying against the best under-26 pilots in the world, we had nailed the last day and come out on top. Working well as a team had proved vital, and that is something that Sam and I had worked really hard on all year. However, this would not have been possible without the help from all of our supporters, coaches, crews and most importantly our sponsors. Thank you for supporting us and we hope you've enjoyed following us throughout the year. Bring on Lithuania 2017!

Getting in touch

We'd love to hear from you. Whether it's just to check on the latest from the Team or you're interested in organising a corporate hospitality day, feel free to get in touch with Matt (Team Sponsorship contact):



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