

1st Women's World Gliding Championships Pociunai – Lithuania 2001



1993 the Czech Republic, 1997 Slovakia, 1999 Poland, 2001 Lithuania and probably 2003 again in the Czech Republic. It had been agreed upon, to organize these Women's championships alternately in the East and the West. For Lithuania not one single non-European pilot has been registered, why and how? Probably the overseas ladies have been waiting too long for this IGC-FAI approval as World championships.

It is high time, in matters of European and World Women's championships not to accept the vote of IGC representatives of countries who have never entered one single woman pilot. One example: here in Pociunai reserve pilot Ada Dankowska was not allowed to participate in club class because there were three other Polish competitors. Yes, she can participate in standard class, but what can she do with a standard Jantar whereas contenders fly on Discus and LS 8? This IGC decision was mainly co-determined by members of countries who had never once delegated a woman pilot.

Upon arrival in Pociunai I thought I was wrong, it can't be here. Nothing going on. Next to a brand-new office building I saw two gentlemen quietly chattering. Please, where can I find Director Vytautas Sabeckis? That's me. I wanted to apologize for being half a day late. "Don't worry, nothing is going on in this training week anyway, see for yourself, not one single woman pilot. And by the way, I don't know yet where I am going to accommodate you. Please go to a hotel of your choice, in 2-3 days I shall know". Unexpected kind of welcome. So I had all the time to visit Lithuania's capital Vilnius, historically very interesting and full of old very well taken care of houses, churches and monuments. On the way back I was happy to make a stop at the historical island castle Rakai.

Back to the airfield. First disillusion: I was to be accommodated in a neglected wooden block house which once had the sumptuous name "the apartment of the colonel". There was a hand-basin, first you wash one hand, then the other, no space for both at the same time. No shower or bathroom, a toilet, yes, you only needed to fill a bucket of water (out of the wash-basin!) and then proceed to "rinse operation".

Surprisingly enough a few days later the organizers seemed ready for their job. In the short training week only one task had been set, however without results so pilots and organizers had had no occasion to get acquainted with the local conditions and acquire much experience.

The excellent opening ceremony had drawn several thousands of visitors to the airfield - when you think Lithuania has only 4,1 million inhabitants... For the rest of the championships public interest was never failing.

Also pilots and crews were often agreeably surprised by events presented by the organizers, sometimes in the evening, sometimes on non-flying days: there was



always something on the programme: a country singer, an accordionist lady with amazing musical talent, an exceptional classical concert by the Kaunas String Ensemble, another concert offered by the municipality of Birstonas, an impressive short Airshow by 3 Yaks, a sweet greeting visit by singing and dancing schoolchildren of Pociunai...

The biggest enemy of the organizers was the weather, apparently very unusual for Kaunas. The official meteorological advisers could hardly cope with the quickly changing conditions. On top of that, for the inexperienced meteo lady it was the first time in her life she functioned at gliding championships, furthermore she really disposed of little observation information. You can imagine how happy the German team was with the presence of dear Uwe Nitz.

One more deception was the “Tasksetter” Kukikaitis, apparently unable to take logical decisions, which made the German team say “He did not even succeed in announcing the right tasks in **good** gliding weather”. How often did he send all pilots in the direction of bad weather, although in the East good thermal conditions lasted for a few hours more.

In competition such methods prevent flying valid tasks, even 2 or 3 were lost in Pociunai, every time pilots failed to reach the turn points because of upcoming new fronts. A lot of outlandings with less than 25% of the pilots reaching the minimum 100 km – SO: neutralized days. Unfortunately this stubborn official understood no reason, he did not even follow advice from the otherwise efficient director Sabeckis who for the rest had operations well in control.

There was not one single protest, mainly because problems were discussed in a friendly way – Sabeckis discussed and consulted the stewards to finally agreeing with them.

As to stewards: cooperation with steward nr 3 Yuri Kuznetzov soon became a problem. In his opinion “Colleague Szczupak and me were active enough, we don't really need him, so he can be free to crew for his friend Tamara Sviridova” NJET.

When people looked for him we forwarded them to the bar where Yuri started with vodka at 9 a.m., “makes thinking easier”, at 11 a.m. he changed to beer.

The scoring team was perfect. Darius Llaugaudas ad C° assured quick and correct treatment of the flights, they immediately downloaded the loggers. The last landing certificate was hardly handed over when already the “unofficial results” were printed off. The scoring team was always helpful in feeding new data in the loggers of the pilots. The website was consulted daily from all over the world, a big success!

Pociunai also used the “tracking device” (cfr Bayreuth W Ch), this way everyone could follow the flights “live”. Before the start the sender was introduced in the cockpits of the best three pilots in the three classes, to show the exact track of the flying pilots. The ladies did agree but insisted their flight could only be shown on the screen with 30 minutes delay. The briefing hall where these data were shown was never empty, as you can imagine...

Confusion at A A T – Assigned Area Tasks. Few pilots were enthusiastic about the A A T rules. True, Brian Spreckley had made a friendly offer to give a short explaining speech on the most important components of this complex system-still, at the end of the competition, even Walter Eisele said “I think now I have understood about 80 % of it”. A A T of course offers flexibility but the calculating exercises seemed somewhat too complicated for more than one pilot.

Let's come to the competition... Some of the A A T missions have lead to confusing conclusions such as more points for landing out than for coming back to Pociunai.

Prescribed distances, i.c the distances reached by the winner were between 160 and 296 km and in 15 m class once 355 km were flown. In club class the best pilots succeeded an average task distance of 209 km.

In 15 m class Gillian Spreckley immediately showed her colours with 3 daily victories. The first competition day she succeeded the only flight with more than 100 km/h speed – the best of the whole championships 102,4 km/h on a distance of 354,9 km. Repeated victory of Gillian on days 2.and 3. with 3 x 1000 points as a rich harvest! The German duo Machinek-Senne was never far,

even if the lead of Gillian on day 2 amounted to 300 points and on day 3 to 225 points.

Title holding European champion Valentyna Toporova lost all title chances and even podium chances on both 2nd and 3rd days.

On the whole pilots were sent 5 times on an A A T , which was not greeted with joy by all... except certainly by Gillian Spreckley who had her good A A T knowledge and tactics from the best source: her husband Brian.

Bad luck, good luck on day 4. The common victory of Angelika Machinek and Katrin Senne coincided with bad luck for the fighting Brit and it allowed both Germans to climb in general ranking – Angelika even came on top. For the remaining 3 competition days the winners were the local matador Edita Skalskiene on her also local LAK 17 A, then Hana Zejdova and finally Angelika Machinek herself. At the very undecided end Angelika Machinek, followed like a shadow by Katrin Senne did catch up on Gillian Spreckley and was only four little – or big? – points short to stand in the middle of the podium, but what a glorious battle of these 3 exceptional pilots!

Another stroke of bad luck for Angelika. During a visit in Kaunas she looked in vain for her car, parked right in front of the police station – with all worries and formalities you can imagine...



Podium 15 m class.

Standard class. Sympathetic Polish Anna Michalak started with a 1000 points victory and as usual she practiced team flying with her friend Halina Rynkiewicz to assure a good starting position. She also won day 4 and 5, but the second day one attended an exceptional exploit of Sarah Steinberg – NOT a new name, two years ago when she won in Poland her name was still Sarah Jane Harland, now it was Mrs Steinberg. She accumulated 1000 points meaning 200 points more than second placed Cornelia Schaich. That was the decisive punch.

A somewhat surprising result was reached by the landing out of. Cornelia Schaich and Sue Kussbach: the AAT system rewarded both with more points than cheerful Swiss Daniele Elmer, who came back to Pociunai some minutes later than the winner of the day Sarah Steinberg but finally was ranked “only” fourth! The German medical student Stefanie Mühl – 25 years young – could still dream of the podium after her victory on day 4 ... she just missed it. Explanation of Cornelia Schaich: We always start as soon as the start line is declared open. This was especially important the last day, when the end of lift came much sooner than expected. This A A T task did not allow to reach the area. Only 2 pilots succeeded to fly more than 100 km. Stefanie Mühl 115 km and Sarah Steinberg 103 km. Both ladies had met a few weeks before in Spain at the world championships of world class and 18 meters. Here the British European standard class champion had beaten all male competitors. As to Stefanie , Spain with its perfect distance flight conditions had been an excellent preparation for Pociunai. but here she was very disappointed with the tasks set ...and only 5 valid competition days in standard class. She remained 4th....and now back to Germany to concentrate on her medical studies....



Podium Standard Class

In club class there never seemed to be any doubt about the final victory of Russian Tamara Sviridova: she won 4 of the 6 days and was threatened in vain by Krystyna Marszalek and the outstanding European champion in Leszno 1999 French Claire Luyat: both ended “ex aequo” 2nd – 2 silver medals! Swaantje Geyer was maybe not so happy with her 7th place, but she had the best German result. It was a battle all the way and the German champion Gudrun Haas, 10th had no real explanation: “Sometimes this kind of flying really gave us cramps , not uninteresting but we did not have one single beautiful flight here in Pociunai.”



Unusual podium Club Class:
Champion Tamara Sviridova (RUS) and ex aequo
2nd Claire Luyat (FRA) and Krystyna Marszalek (POL).

Were these World championships? Unfortunately no, they were European championships, the non-Europeans did not turn up.

As farewell: the Babajaga ceremony. It must have been quite some concentrated witchcraft that stopped the initial drops of rain. Local star Edita Skalskiene could proceed to the initiation of the novices, each with the blessings of her individual godmother. After their dance around the fire all were surprised by an unexpected show: a dynamic (or dynamite?)



French CAN-CAN by Lithuanian Babajagas.

French Can Can ballet by a group of Lithuanian gliding colleagues coming all the way from Kaunas by bus to offer this entertainment to the applauding crowd. My personal opinion this was the best initiation ceremony ever. Till late in the evening Babajagas and company continued feasting and dancing around the flaming bonfire...



41 Babajagas from 12 countries.

1. World Women's Gliding CHAMPIONSHIPS 2001 POCIUNAI LITH

15 m. Class	11 Pilots	7 contest days	
1. Gillian Spreckley	GB	Ventus 2a	4677 P
2. Angeleika Machinek	D	Ventus 2a	4673
3. Katrin Senne	D	Ventus 2	4641
4. Valentina Toporova	UKR	Ventus 2	4548
5. Annette Klossok	D	Asw 27	4503
6. Hanna Zejdova	CZ	Ventus b	4387
7. Bozena Demeczenko	PL	Asw	4215
8. Jana Veprenkova	CZ	Ventus 2C	4116
9. Edita Skalskiene	Lith	LAK 17 A	3852
10. Maria Bolla	UNG	Ventus 2	3826
11. Margherita Aquaderni	ITA	DG 800	3594

Standard Class	11 Pilots	5 contest days	
1. Sarah Steinberg	GB	Asw 24	4275 P
2. Anna Michalak	PL	LS 8	3928
3. Halina Rynkiewicz	PL	LS 8	3769
4. Stefania Mühl	D	Discus2b	3616
5. Cornelia Schaich	D	LS 8	3506
6. Jane Mc Coshim	GB	LS 8	3451
7. Sue Kussbach	D	LS 8	3391
8. Jana Treslova	CZ	Discus b	2914
9. Lenka Kuthanova	CZ	Discus	2870
10. Daniela Elmer	CH	Discus 2	2839
11. Ada Dankowska	PL	Jantar	2425

Club Class	19 Pilots	6 contest days	
1. Tamara Sviridova	RUS	Jantar Std	4283 P
2. Krystyna Marszalek	PL	Jantar Std	4124
Claire Luyat	FR	Pegase	
4. Hana Vkrinkova	CZ	Asw 15	4092
5. Eva Cerna	CZ	Asw 19	4025
6. Tatiana Kuzmina	LAT	Jantar Std	3970
7. Swantje Geyer	D	LS 1f	3913
8. Valentina Jewdokymen	UKR	Jantar Std	3850
9. Rosemary Johnson	GB	DG 100	3764
10. Gudrun Haas	D	Std Libelle	3679
11. Marina Kalajeva	RUS	Jantar Std	3576
12. Joanna Biedermann	PL	Jantar Std	3467
13. Sylvia Stampke	D	LS 1f	3373
14. Maksimiliana Czmiel	PL	Jantar Std	3118
15. Daina Vilne	LAT	Jantar Std	2759
16. Jurgita Galvelyte	LAT	Jantar Std	2261
17. Dalia Vainiene	LT	Jantar Std	2194
18. Joanta Beinoravicie	LT	Jantar Std	2098
19. Valentina Supe	LAT	Jantar Std	1427