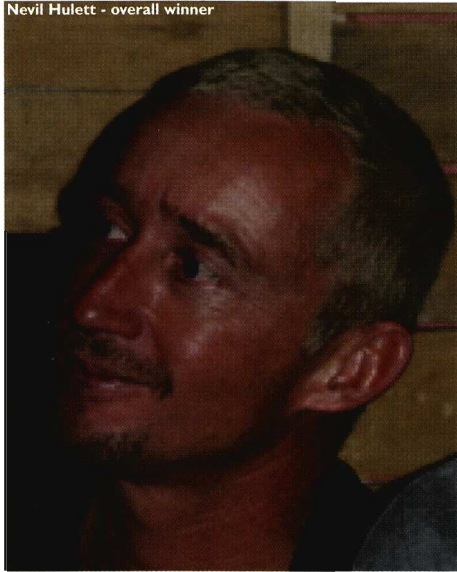


Nevil Hulett - overall winner



ARNA GOLDSMITH



CHRIS BURNS

## British Open

The British Open was held at Piedrahita in central Spain in conjunction with the British Championships, with 137 pilots entered from all over the world.

Although there was some doubt if the main take-off at Peña Negra would be open, in the event we were able to use it on all the tasks. A court had ruled that inducements given by regional government for the use of the take-off are legally binding and the launch above the road is for the use of free-flying in perpetuity. With the weather looking good for the first day, only the diehards from the South African contingent stay up late at a party in the Panera Bar. In the end it proves flyable every day but not always safe for running tasks.

**Day 1.** In fact a not-so-good forecast with westerly winds, cloud and a low base. A 45km race task is set, up and down the ridge then out to a village in the valley with goal in Piedrahita. The pilots leave in small groups as the lift is light, and the race along the ridge claims over 30% of the field. With high cirrus coming in to shut down the convection nobody makes goal. Adrian Thomas (Gin Boomerang) wins the day, 7km short of goal with Slovakia's Dusan Kultan (Gradient Avax Rx) second and Russell Ogden (Ozone Proton GT) third.

**Day 2.** With high winds forecast to drop, pilots are sent to take-off for briefing. The wind is still too strong for a task and briefing is rescheduled for 5pm. The wind starts to die down so a task is set along the ridge with goal in Piedrahita, but cancelled for safety reasons 25 minutes after the window is opened. The wind is gusting to over 50km/h on take-off. However many pilots ignore the radio cancellation call and around 12 of them make goal just before the land-by time of 10pm. The task is invalid due to it being impossible to keep the take-off window open for sufficient time.

**Days 3 and 4.** High winds send everybody to the lake for windsurfing and kitesurfing.

**Day 5.** Guess what? It's windy again... back to the lake! No-one can believe that it can be so cold in Piedrahita in the middle of July - it's freezing.

**Day 6.** At last a forecast of less wind. With an easterly and a rising cloudbase a 76km task is set: a race down to the radio masts 35km to the west, then back into wind to goal in Piedrahita. The race gets off to a slow start, but the light thermals improve along the course. A South African pilot forgets to do up his leg straps and hits the road just in front of take-off, but goes on to make 10th despite injury! Over 40% of the field make the turnpoint at the masts, but the promised light wind is not so light and makes the into-wind run to goal very difficult. The day was won again by Adrian Thomas, just 8km short of goal with Nevil Hulett from South Africa (Gradient Avax Rx) second and Mark Watts (Windtech Silex) third.

**Final day.** The best forecast of the week: clear skies and a 4,000m cloudbase. Instead of the usual short last-day task it is decided to make the most of the conditions and a 101km straight race to goal at Fuentemilanos is set. With conditions improving very quickly and the legendary local convergence predicted, pilots are soon away. The infamous pass at Villafranca claims less than 20% of the pilots and the field is soon on its way to Avila and beyond. The convergence is hard to find beyond Avila but eight pilots manage to reconnect and make it to goal. The day is won by Carlo Borsattino (Windtech Silex), who flies a blinder to be first home after six and a half hours' in the air. Sweden's Oliver Thurmann (Windtech Quarx) is second and Dusan Kultan third. Comp leader Adrian Thomas goes down with Bruce Goldsmith (Airwave Magic) at 67km, handing the overall win to Nevil Hulett.

Best Brit pilot in the comp is Carlo Borsattino, just five points behind Nevil Hulett. The Cross-Country sponsored Serial class competition goes Mike Aston (Apco Bagheera) ahead of Bruce Goldsmith and Oliver Thurmann. Best woman pilot is South Africa's Maryna Strydom (Gin Bandit) and the team win goes to the Windtech boys.

The organisation has to work late to get the results out, which appear at midnight! The top five are separated by only 39 points! The presentation and last-night party is held in the La Bonbonera bar and lasts until after 6.30am, with the now customary

party piece from the South Africans - this year involving Greg Browne in a tartan posing pouch. Not a pretty sight!

Congratulations to all the pilots and to the organisation for a great, safe comp (no reserve deployments this year!), and many thanks to primary sponsors Ozone, Windtech and XC magazine; also to Airbase and Green Dragons who provided prizes.

1	Nevil Hulett	Gradient Avax Rx	S.Africa	2339
2	Carlo Borsattino	Windtech Silex	GB	2334
3	Adrian Thomas	Gin Boomerang	GB	2312
4	Mike Aston	Apco Bagheera	GB	2301
5	Suby Lutolf	Windtech Silex	Spain	2301
6	Ondrej Dupal	Gradient Avax Rx	Czecho	2284
7	Cifuentes Jorge David	Windtech Silex	Colombia	2220
8	Steve Ham	Edel Boomerang	GB	2159
9	Bruce Goldsmith	Airwave Magic	GB	2151
10	Oliver Thurmann	Windtech Quarx	Sweden	2097
11	Fraser Marwick	Gradient Avax Rx	GB	2076
12	Andre Rainsford-Alberts	Swing Cirrus	S.Africa	2062
13	Mark Watts	Windtech Silex	GB	2057
14	Graham Steel	Advance Omega 5	GB	2035
15	Paul Pallet	Apco Bagheera	S.Africa	1984
16	John Nicholas	Apco Bagheera	S.Africa	1978
17	Russell Ogden	Ozone Proton GT	GB	1910
18	Paddy McCarthy	Gradient Saphir	GB	1899
19	Dusan Kultan	Gradient Avax Rx	Slovakia	1895
20	Stewart Dennis	Nova Argon	Australia	1837

115 pilots scored

REPORT BY CHRIS BURNS; ADDITIONAL MATERIAL BY CARLO BORSATTINO, BRUCE GOLDSMITH AND STEVE UZUCHUKWU.

## Australian Paragliding Open

This FAI Category 2 event will run at Bright, Australia from February 16 - 23 Feb next year. Entry fee is A\$180, discounted to A\$140 if paid received before January 1st. Organiser is Karl Texler at (+61) 357 501733, fax: /357 501153, e-mail: brightvt@netc.net.au, website <http://home.netc.net.au/~alpcomp/BrightOpen2002/>.