

F3J world championships in South Africa

Uncle Sydney's Mini Gossip column

25 July 2012

Approaching the eighth FAI F3J World Championships in South Africa I began to itch with gossip. Two years ago after France I decided to give up gossiping, perhaps a sign of old age, certainly it was getting harder to plough through my disorganised F3J documents for names, results and the dramas which paved the way since 1998 in Upton.

But the urge to tap the keyboard is still strong, the excitement of the forthcoming championships is real, and for the first time sadly, I shall not be there to witness this trial of the best thermal soaring pilots and their teams in the world. London's Olympics - forget them - just look out for Michelle's big contest!

And I know after last year's Eurochamps in Bovec from the number of friends who bemoaned the demise of Uncle Sydney, that the popular read was the betting on who will make the flyoffs. That should be easier this time because we only need the recent form of 58 senior pilots and 21 juniors.

What a pity that for some teams the expense of travelling to what so many people reckon is the most beautiful country in the world has been too much. But the pilot I shall miss most is Philip Kolb, not in the German team for once, and now that he has made Turkey his home, he is not yet in the Turkish team. At least he and his presence will be there.

Trying to pick the winners made me realise just what a pack of tried and proven past winners will be vying for the flyoffs. I ticked off 20 pilots, any of whom could take the contest, never mind the last twelve. Of course it might not be twelve, the contest director might add or take off one or two. But how to narrow the list to twelve!

Carl Strautins from Australia retains his bubbling enthusiasm, and David Hobby will be eager to come back after his sad problems in France. Arend Borst from Canada has not won since Lappeenranta and is the only pilot I know who will take off his servo cases to save a gram or two.

Arijan Hucaljuk from Croatia who startled us all with his mighty one second preliminary round launches by his father and won in Bovec last year to become Eurochamp, is a strong contender even if the team has only two pilots. Germany has Benedikt Feigl, Turkey's 2008 winner, and Tobias Lammlein, junior world champ in Finland and rarely off the podium anywhere.

Italy and particularly the Gallazia family have established F3J successes for many years and Giovanni Gallazia will not have studies in the US to distract him this year. Can New Zealand repeat the triumphs they have achieved since Joe Wurts changed countries just a few years ago? You can't keep him down in F3J or F3K.

Jo Grini and his son Fredrik will be in the Norwegian team with Aril Rosvik, and I hope that Jo will have no quarrels with the rules or timing this year and concentrate on making the final rounds. Poland were strong in Bovec last year and Wojciech Byrski's models and his piloting skills will make him a favourite. Jan Littva, the younger, from Slovakia will be competing with his father, also Jan Littva, but I do not see any conflict of interest except when it comes to the scores.

Primož Rizner from Slovenia has a consistent knack of sticking with the leaders and their team is strong. Missing name from the South African team is Craig Goodrum and I guess that his omission stems from the

support he is giving to chief organiser Michelle and the whole event. Turkey will be more determined than ever to keep their team triumph in Bovec and you could pick out any one of the team for the final rounds. I go for Eser Kismir.

I wish the UK team all the best, and from the forecast weather conditions, the South African flying experience could be far closer to UK conditions than is usual in FAI championships. On their day any one of the three could make it, but with four or five days to fly, they will need a little luck or some of the London 2012 fervour from home.

The United States of America have probably got the largest team on the sod farm, with defending champions Daryl Perkins and Brendon Beardsley, junior but now senior pilot, added to their official team of three pilots. Glad to see that Jim Monaco has come back into the fold as team manager.

That still does not reduce to twelve. My guess list is: Carl Strautins, Arend Borst, Arijan Hucaljuk, Tobi Lammlein, Giovanni Gallazia, Joe Wurts, Joe Grini, Wojciech Byrski, Primoz Rizner, Eser Kismir, Cody Remington and Daryl Perkins. The 2012 champion to be: my bet would be that Arijan will become the first pilot to win both Euro and World championships in consecutive years.

My biggest wish is that everyone taking part has a wonderful sporting championships.

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