

["I feel the need, the need for distance, time and speed."]

3rd AUSTRALIAN WINGSUIT TRACKING RACE

8-9 March 2014, Newcastle Sport Parachute Club
By Roger Hugelshofer

While not a direct quote from anyone at the event, we were all thinking it. Whether in a big or intermediate wingsuit, or a tracking suit, the only way to victory was to dominate our friends in these three disciplines: distance, time and speed. Friendships were on hold; mercy was not tolerated, competing jumpers glanced furtively at each other sideways while they packed in silence. This was Wingsuit racing – or at least how I envisioned it before I turned up to the drop zone.

The third Australian Wingsuit and Tracking Race was held at Newcastle Sport Parachute Club on 8 March 2014. I had also attended the previous two events and this one promised to be the biggest and most competitive one yet. Biggest it was, but the competition was still conducted in the same calm and friendly manner that befits everything at the Elderslie drop zone. Organised by the NSPC and by the local Wingsuit event organisers "JetStream", the competition had been postponed from the previous week

due to poor weather. Whilst this unfortunately resulted in a few people having to pull out, there was, nonetheless, the biggest turnout ever.

In the Open division there were four entrants: Paul Munroe flying an Intrudair Manta, Dave Dobson in a Phoenix Fly Venom, Jose Calderon in a Vampire 4 and Roger Hugelshofer in a Tony Suits X3. In the Intermediate division there were ten competitors (including myself) using a variety of beginner and Intermediate Wingsuits. In the Tracking competition we had Jacob Bennett, Zoran Stopar and the dedicated visitors from interstate, Chris Byrnes and Mark Laing – all with Tracking suits.

The entire event was conducted in line with similar international competitions as set out in the Paralog Performance Competition, with the results all published online. All participants jumped with a Flysight GPS, which records the necessary flight data, and data between 3,000m and 2,000m (9,850ft and 6,550ft), known as "the competition window", was analysed by software to produce the results of a jump. In the Distance competition jumpers flew with the intention of flying further within the competition window; adopted the body position that would achieve the most optimal glide ratio. In the Speed competition we were to achieve the maximum, average, horizontal speed through the window; and in Time we had to simply stay in the window for as long as possible.

Sounds simple right? Winning was not so simple.

On the morning of the competition the weather couldn't have been better. Six rounds of wingsuiting were completed, two for Distance, two for Speed and two for Time. The Tracking competition had only Distance and Speed so they did three of each. Some solid results started coming in immediately. Roger Hugelshofer and Paul Monroe were locked in a battle for first place in Open. This was extremely impressive work from Paul given it was only his second jump on the specific suit he was using for the competition. Ash Darby and Ria Casey Peck produced outstanding scores in the Intermediate competition flying Phoenix Fly Havoks; but previous year's winner Jason Dodunski again blitzed the competition in his class using a Phantom 3. I thought he wasn't serious when he said he was using a secret Yves Rossy-inspired rocket booster on his gear but looking at his scores I'm not so sure he was joking. Queensland Tracker, Mark Laing, immediately looked to be the one to beat in the Tracking event. Obviously in a great mindset that day he related sophisticated and pleasant jokes with Alex 'Nugget' Joannou and I on the ride to height.

Eventually, after a great day of jumping (notwithstanding a minor scare for us when the fuel pump got lazy and wouldn't refill the plane for a few minutes) Roger, Jason and Mark emerged as the victors in the Open, Intermediate and Tracking classes. Paul Monroe was hot on Roger's heels in second place in the Open division, with Ria Casey Peck and Ash Darby rounding out second and third in the Intermediate division.

Queensland jumper Chris Byrnes placed second in the Tracking event.

In news that won't surprise people who visit NSPC, the event was extremely well organised and ran very smoothly. Thank you again to the dedicated and professional staff at Elderslie. Particularly Cliff Wilson and Kenton McLeod. Thanks also to Team JetStream for helping organise the event.

The Australian Wingsuit and Tracking Race for 2015 has already been scheduled and we're all hoping to see more people attend. As with previous years, we've found that the scores are actually the least important part of the weekend, with fun and safety being the top priorities. It never fails to be an awesome weekend of skydiving.

Also a massive thanks to our long-term partners Paralog (E-Logbook) and FlySight (GPS) as well as our main sponsor Intrudair (Skydive and Base Gear)

Wingsuit Intermediate (overall)

1. Jason Dodunski
2. Ria Casey Peck
3. Ash Darby

Wingsuit Open (overall)

1. Roger Hugelshofer
2. Paul Munroe
3. Dave Dobson

Tracking

1. Mark Allan Laing
2. Chris Byrnes
3. Jacob Bennett

The Fastest Australian

Jose Calderon: 218.4km/h

Intrudair
skydive and base gear

Paralog

FLY SIGHT
BIONIC AVIONICS

JETSTREAM