

# The On-Line Contest Story and

## A Review of the 2014 Season

Photos: LSV Burgdorf, E. F-P, and others

# its History . . . .



Elke Fuglsang-Petersen

**T**he idea of having a portal where glider pilots can upload their flights from GPS logs, grew in the late 1990s together with the growing popularity of GPS navigation support and internet availability. Before that we had all been flying around with old cameras, searching for way points on the ground and trying to catch the turn point from the right angle - violently banking the glider to not miss the important spot. Then an evaluator would have to locate the spot and calculate the angle on a fuzzy photo. Whew!

OLC's first scoring lists appeared on the web in 2001, mostly used by German speaking pilots at that time as it had been invented against all odds. Reiner Rose was the stimulus, and he still is. The team around him has grown over the years, as has the platform itself. A little more than a decade later the portal is now appreciated worldwide and is a well used tool for gliding. The number of uploaded flights and signed up competitors (490 users in 2001) still rises continuously. In 2004 OLC was recognised by the FAI and by 2006 it claimed to be "the world's No. 1 in decentralised flight contests".

By this time a number of European countries and the United States had already been invited to participate. The Southern Hemisphere was integrated later - the programming development took a while.

In 2010 Reiner Rose and his team of volunteers were awarded the FAI's prestigious Lilienthal medal "to reward eminent services to the sport of gliding over a long period of time".

At the end of the 2014 season we counted 115,155 flights, 32,221,308 kilometres flown by 14,935 competitors – worldwide of course.

Now a word about how the system keeps up its excellent job and its high standards. As a non-profit organisation OLC is mostly reliant on volunteers. Some services, like web-hosting for example have to be paid for and several popular sponsors contribute to the platform. International readers might know about the Airbus Group or one of the many glider manufacturers? Also individuals are invited to donate to the platform and therefore receive a 'smiley'.

In my German club we started using OLC's services in 2003 and when in 2010 I first visited a US-gliderport to ask about their soaring activities, I was surprised about the question - 'Do you upload your flights onto the OLC?'. "Of course, I do!" I hadn't yet realised that on the other side



The "Dream Team". Dennis Tito and Jim Payne Photo: Jackie Payne

of the globe pilots were also keen on scoring OLC points. It was interesting, though, to see how much more was possible when you had mountains beneath you and a big sky above.

Later I became the English-correspondent for OLC's Magazine and so I learnt more about the worldwide importance of the unique organisation. Amazing to watch where, when and under which conditions people were logging their flights to share them with the rest of the soaring world!

Well, maybe still not everywhere on the world. Some countries, like France for example, have their own scoring system. Talking to pilots from New Zealand, I noticed they are

up for different goals. Record flights for example seem to be much more important in some countries than they have been during the past years in Germany. After the invention of the more convenient OLC-scoring, most German pilots found it easier to simply fly out, follow the weather and look for the distance calculation afterwards. With better navigation instrumentation it is now possible to combine a record flight and a good OLC score. Many pilots take advantage of both - record attempts and OLC points.

## 2014 SEASON

Here now are the results of the most popular 2014 OLC-scores and competitions:

**OLC Champion:** First and above all, Jim Payne flew a DG 1001M in Argentina and at home in the Sierra Nevada together with different co-pilots. Runner-up, was the Swiss pilot Jean-Marc Perrin who visited Chile for some weeks in the winter of 2013/14 where he chased his DG 808 along the Andes for distance points. Reinhard Schramme (Germany) flew an Arcus M in Bitterwasser and is placed third worldwide.

The most remarkable flight was probably Jim Payne's Super Coup on December 29, 2013, when he and his co-pilot Juan Pagano scored the highest amount of points OLC has ever awarded for a flight: 2486.37



Engendering Club Spirit. Members of the Burgdorf Club (Germany) lined up for a mass start attempt at winning the O.L.C. club contest

OLC-Plus points! Jim is 3,300 points above the next best.

**OLC Speed Champion:** Like in the past years, again Jim Payne is the Champion in this category. You have to be fast if you want to fly far. His co-pilot on many fast rides Dennis Tito is the world's second fastest glider pilot. Again Reinhard Schramme who uses thermals (not wave!) in Bitterwasser now finds his name in third place.

The fact that Dennis Tito's fastest flight happened to be on June 25, 2014 might surprise the reader? Here is his explanation: "Despite it being well past wave season, the forecast said Minden would have afternoon wave. The day offered good markers from mid-afternoon, improving as time passed..."

**Statistical "best flight":** Jim Payne's flight from Nahuel Huapi, Argentina as mentioned previously was the best on Earth. Jean-Marc Perrin scored second best in Chile almost on the same day. The third best flight was accomplished by Brian Collins on April 23, 2014 at Ridge Soaring gliderport in the U.S.A's Appalachians. It's up to you if you call it "in" or "above" the Appalachians, as flying "knee high" along the ridges in a PIK 20 B is probably not everyone's favourite Brian comments on his OLC run: "A good, long day - ridge/wave/thermals. Light precipitation in the early morning, followed by lingering moisture north of Cumberland through about noon, blue skies

in the afternoon down south. Just enough daylight to finish the task, but not enough lift to quite get home."

**The fastest flight of the 2014 OLC-season:** Once more... Jim and Juan flying from Nahuel Huapi.

**OLC League:** This exciting online-competition takes place during the Northern summer months. OLC's League is a contest during which clubs compete as teams against each other. The format was developed by the German OLC core team following the concept of soccer/football/basketball leagues that have been using similar systems for decades. It is also offered to the United States, Switzerland, Australia, and since April 2014 for French and Austrian clubs.

League scoring is very convenient for many pilots, as they do not have to fly a whole day; 2.5 hours of high speed soaring will be enough to score some points for your club. Clubs that have a mountain ridge nearby can take advantage of their lines of lift. Western American clubs can fly higher (thus faster) than the rest of the world.

However a German flatland club has been dominating not just the country's scores over the last three years. A Duo-Discus from Burgdorf flew with an average of 144.46 km/h over 2.5 hours, the highest German speed of the OLC Year 2014. LSV Burgdorf is listed third worldwide! The 2014 season has

been the fourth year in a row that the club near Hannover is among the fastest soaring clubs worldwide. In the German League they have long replaced the Southern German club Königsdorf, near Munich. True, the weather in the Alps was not its best in 2014. Thumbs up for the flatlands!

## IGC WORLD LEAGUE

1. Albuquerque Soaring,
2. Minden Soaring,
3. LSV Burgdorf

Did you know the town of Moriarty has become famous mostly because of OLC? The home of Albuquerque's soaring club is one of the prime locations for glider lovers to travel to. Their hangars on the airfield are always busy with lots of interesting things to discover. In this small and dusty town, businesses have grown while contests are being staged. Not only are the motels booked out but the owner of the local auto shop is a very happy-chappy as well! I guess the same happens some 1000 miles further west in Minden.

But back to some further interesting facts: OLC also offers airfield statistics - one for total distance flown which creates the OLC-Plus points score. Secondly, further points are calculated called the OLC- speed points. Bitterwasser achieved 710,940.28 km. This from only a short African season. They



*Its time your club enjoyed the exciting scene that the O.L.C. provides.  
Bring your club onto the world-wide competitive contests*

can be found on top of both lists, followed by the French at Puimoisson with 575,754.51 km. Third place goes to Fuentemilanos in central Spain.

Now, have you already determined when and where to plan your next gliding trip? Unfortunately most of the world's soaring paradises are not just around the corner from your home airfield . . . OLC can help: when browsing the statistics you might well find a lot more interesting places to soar from.

The club statistics are interesting, too. You can see easily see which clubs are the most active.

Did you know a small European country keeps up an amazing performance, despite terribly restricted airspace, a dense population, a flat and sometimes wet countryside and the challenging Northern European weather conditions?

The most OLC-Plus points scored for cross country flights went to the members of the

Gliding Club of Victoria in Australia. The second busiest club in the world is the Dutch Gelderse Zweefvliegclub where their 106 pilots mostly fly out of Terlet, Netherlands! Third best is their neighbor Amsterdamsche Zweefvliegen.

Some Dutch pilots have travelled to other European airfields during the 2014 season. Some spent the northern winter in the Southern Hemisphere, but most distance-points were scored at home.

By the way the biggest OLC club is Königsdorf, close to the German Alps. They have 108 pilots (two more scoring pilots than Gelderse). But as mentioned earlier, the alpine weather in 2014 was indeed a disappointment.

**Club Statistic (most OLC-League points scored):** Obviously those who fly a lot will have the most points in their speed accounts. Here again the Gliding Club of Victoria tops the list, followed by

Gelderse Zweefvliegclub. Due to their continuous high speed performance Germany's LSV Burgdorf is third best in this category.

Some additional competitions supported by OLC are worthy of a mentioned here: On the main page there is a list of local competitions for OLC's sponsors. The soaring centres in Bitterwasser, Minden, NV and the German Wasserkuppe rate highest.

**OLC's Grand Prix** event, which took place on the Wasserkuppe in 2013, again scored well in 2014. Unfortunately the concept of "Catch the Champion" did not attract enough participants.

The Wasserkuppe is a wonderful mountain to visit by car, bike or "à pied" and the local school is also a great place for students to learn to fly. The historic birthplace of gliding is well worth a day or two. Spectators are invited to tour the museum and watch all kinds of



*Billy Hill returning from a speed mission over New Mexico*

Photo: Mike Abernathy

gliding activities - hang-gliders, models etc . . . Only competing glider pilots seek to finish their task by landing back up on the mountain in the evening. They often struggle to gain enough altitude to make the runway which is 900 metres above sea level.

The unique U.S.A. crowd of 1-26 pilots on several U.S. airfields who fly their individually designed wooden and metal ships call their competitions "Flying Circuses". I am pleased to see that they dominate the 2014 Vintage Glider Club Oldtimer Scoring. Doug Levy (USA, 1-26 Association) is the 2014 Oldtimer Champion followed by his club mate Garry Dickson, the runner up. In third place is the German pilot Hanspeter Schmid who flies an LCF II, a 13 metre club class single-seater suitable for aerobatics. (Only one has ever been built that is flying).

Garry Dickson's wooden Schweizer 1-26 goes by the

name of '2x4'. Well, he is a carpenter! Riding his unique white and light blue glider above the Sierras he scored 1002.14 OLC plus points – the second best old-timer flight of the 2014 season. The best was of course performed by the master of ridge running the Appalachians, Ron Schwartz (1206.97 points).

The world's biggest triangular flight has been awarded the prestigious **Barron Hilton Challenge Trophy** which several years ago replaced the famous and fun-filled Barron Hilton Cup. In 2014 Mitch Polinsky won the challenge with one of his huge and fast triangles flown over the desert launching from Ely, NV in western U.S. Philippe Athuil took advantage of the same conditions and was placed second. Yet again a German pilot, Guy Bechthold, is among the first three names on the list. He flew his great triangle in Bitterwasser.

Last but not least, the OLC supports a European youth com-

petition, the Bitterwasser Cup.

This is the only multinational contest listed on OLC's platform, where you can actually win a real prize, an eight day stay at the Bitterwasser Lodge, including food, the travel and an appropriate glider! In earlier years the cup was available to pilots of all ages, but with the soaring population becoming thinner (not only in Europe), it has been a good idea to sponsor the young blood!

The Bitterwasser Cup competition runs over a period of two years which began in the spring of 2014. Currently Maximilian Schäfer is in first place, but there will be one more year to score points for those who complete six great flights while under age 25.

Mostly German pilots are listed in the Bitterwasser Cup, which is a busy place to educate boys and girls in soaring.

We wish you all a happy new OLC year for 2015!



*The 'Blooming' fields of the Netherlands* Photo Gail Schipper