

Pilotreport : Worldrecord O/R 1000 km speed task 26.12.2009

Rain in San Martin is a record day. When we arrive at the airfield we are far away to believe it.

Nearly no wind and steady small raindrops on all our stuff, not really encouraging. Anyway we prepare the glider, tow'em to the runway and wait for the first grey light. A small sleep in the car and half an hour later I decide to cancel the day. But during the tow back to the parking, a small foehn gap starts to open and immediately I turn back to the start position. We have the car to drive back to the parking besides the tower and enjoy a refreshing walk of 1500 m along the wet runway. It's still raining. We climb into the cockpit and despite the small rain, we start. 2300 m runway helps a lot to get our wet wings in the air. Once high enough we turn to the east, where it seems to be dryer. Some wet and low lenticularis look promising but more than 0,3 m/s is difficult to find, wind is very strong in our 2000 m and confirms the forecast. But in the northeast it should be much weaker and more adapted to a good wave developpement.

Finally, after a long time, a little meter lift's us as high as 3500 m and here we go.

No alignements in sight, only little rotor puffs, so we continue, one eye to the emergency field of Las Coloradas. We sink as low as our start height, when finally a sudden turbulence shows us a hidden rotor. Soon we get in a quite strong wave. At 4000 m we are on our way to the startpoint. Below we can see a little lake where the wind is chasing the water in circles all around. Good to be in the laminar flow.. But now we pass the start gate. Small rotors ahead, but as well heavy sink. It's better to be a little bit higher, but lift was not really record like. We continue to the north and finally, west of Las Lajas, a huge lift with 6 m/s confirms that it could be a record day. In 5000 m the Nimbus shoots forward with maximum speed , but still climbing.

The usual run via Loncopue, Caviahue, Cordillera de viento, Domuyo is deceiving. But a look in the Rio Grande valley shows some nice developing rotors. Time to go back for the real start of our 1000 km speedtask. The second departure is 1000 m higher, in order to avoid weak lifts. Same way to the north, but now we know exactly where the stronger waves are to find. This time we avoid Domuyo pushing directly to northeast crossing the wild Barrancas valley to Rio Grande. In 4000 m we arrive just high enough to stay above the thermal layer below us. Radio contact with Malargue, the gentle controller makes the airspace coordination with Mendoza Control due to lack of their range for radio contact. Actually only FL 195 allowed. A long band of huge clouds west of Malargue seems to be a mighty rotor. Only the more experienced pilots know that it's only a thermal convergence line with rough turbulent lifts above the cloudbase. The wave is much more in the west, indicated today only by small condensations. As so often, the turnpoint is in heavy sink.. Back to the south, we need some lift, in only 4000 m you are very near of turbulent levels, bad for a good speed. I learnt to be patient with wave...it's so easy to loose one hour, when being too gorgeous, just to save 5 minutes. South of Malargue we ask for FL 250, and this time Mendoza gives his OK. " No transito reportado", we can fly up to 7500 m, which is a huge advantage for certain passages. The way to be fast, but now we need a lift, fast enough to climb at this level. A well marked rotor shows us the way. More than 4 m/s, but Sidonie calculates that we have to go faster to beat the current record. So, high speed, our modified racer has to show his qualities. With this altitude crossing from the lee to the Cordillere de viento is quite easy.. Malargue reminds us, that Ezeiza Control allows only FL 195, but that is no problem for us. A last climb with reduced speed in the mighty C.de viento-wave, then the highway to heaven of Loncopue Valley allows us groundspeeds up to 350 km/h. We arrive at the finishpoint 15 minutes faster than the current worldrecord... Happiness....by Klaus Ohlmann