

Varsity 2018

By Chia-Man Hung

The Gliding Varsity match is the annual soaring competition between Oxford and Cambridge. Points are scored for flight duration and height gain. There is a max duration of 50 minutes per flight, with points deducted for every minute over 50. Two points are awarded for each 100 ft of height gained after the launch, provided the climb is maintained for 500 ft. The best scoring flight of the day for each pilot is scored.

This year, it was held in Gransden Lodge, home of CUGC, the Cambridge University Gliding Club. The competition itself was only three days long, but our preparation started long before that. Our very committed coach/instructor/most experienced pilot Dinant mainly organised it and selected our team: Dinant, Artur, Marc, Tor, Pratyusha and me. Except for Dinant, it is the first time we took part in Varsity and also the first time we flew in their airfield. Three of us only started gliding this academic year. We might not have the most experienced team, but we certainly had the most dedicated team! All of us especially trained for it, and some of us were still training even the day before the competition.

Day 0 – 19th June 2018

In a lovely evening, with a lot of excitement, we headed off to Gransden. Special thanks to Julian for towing ESB there and back to Bicester and for giving us tips for best



thermallings spots as well as food! First impression of the airfield – Beautiful airfield in the middle of a lot of green, amazing club facilities and surprisingly comfortable bunk rooms (every night I fell asleep after three seconds in bed)!

A small tip for future readers preparing to stay in their bunk rooms – the rooms are self-locking, so don't leave your keys in the rooms :-). If you actually find yourself in this situation, we could provide you with further tips!



Day 1 – 20th June 2018

We started the day with a thorough site brief from the duty instructor Andy. The main differences in their operation is that (a) they double check whether the airbrakes are closed and locked before hooking the cable and (b) they make a radio call before landing, usually in the downwind leg, as they don't place the bus in the middle to separate left-hand and right-hand circuits.

Weather-wise, it was a perfect day... for site checks and conversion checks. We all had site checks, but no scoring flights. Highlight of the day was Artur converting to Junior and Dinant to ASW19! I have to add that it was a windy day (~15 kts) and I was amazed by their long runway! For my own site check flight, I got up to almost 2000 ft off the winch launch! And I landed straight ahead off a launch failure at over 400 ft!

The real challenge during the competition was finding something all of us could eat. After a lot of different food proposals, we ended up cooking chili con quorn for dinner! Shout out to Dinant for being the chef, Tor for helping with the preparation and Artur and Pratyusha for grocery shopping and cleaning! The sauce tasted great! Apparently, I made porridge instead of rice, :-) but we still finished all of it! Non-flying related activities were also part of the fun. After dinner, we enjoyed the sunset, Frisbee, listening to our own echoes and Dinant's favourite card game that he taught us how to play.



Day 2 – 21st June 2018

This is probably the best gliding day in the past three or four years. I saw their club members started rigging their gliders at 7am, preparing for a big cross-country flight! When we arrived at the launch point, gliders were already lined up for aerotow and winch launches. It was a very busy start, but as soon as all the other gliders were gone for cross-country, the launch point was back to normal again. No big queues to wait for winch launching!



After a few check flights, the exciting scoring part of the competition finally started! In our team, Artur went up first in a single-seater Junior first, but the conditions were probably still weak and he didn't manage to stay up. Tor took off with Dinant in ESB and did pretty well in the beginning, but apparently he was too aggressive on descending with full airbrakes. At some point, he couldn't find any more lift and landed after around half an hour. I took off with a local instructor Rebecca just after Tor in a local K21 and luckily found strong lift right off the winch. I had +6 kts for some of the climbs and it was definitely the best flight I've ever had. I scored 204 points and I was very pleased, given that I'd never scored more than 100 points in any of my previous flights. After that, it was Pratyusha's turn with Rebecca! The beginning of her flight was a bit of a struggle, but once she found a thermal and climbed away from the winch, it went very well and she scored 165 points!

After lunch, Artur decided to give another go and so did Tor. At this point, we were a bit stressed because we heard from CUGC that they already had multiple very good flights with many climbs. After 50 minutes, Artur landed and I went up to ask how it went. He didn't seem very happy about his flight and he told me he did okay. We found



out only later that he actually had the best flight of the entire competition and scored 323 points! It was far more than just okay! He had multiple climbs from 2000 ft to 5000 ft and it was fantastic! Tor landed a few minutes after Artur, and this time, with a big smile! Woohoo, another fantastic flight from OUGC, scoring 271 points!

Looking at the traces, it is amazing to see how consistent his climbs were. Dinant flew at the end of the day in relatively weak conditions, but he was Dinant so he still managed 205 points!

Oxford	Raw score	Normalised	Cambridge	Raw score	Normalised
Artur Doshchyn	323	139	Chris Barrott	280	121
Chia-Man Hung	204	88	Tomasz	255	110
Tor Walberg	271	117	Hugh Hudson	209	90
Dinant Riks	205	88	Nat West	147	63
Total	1003	432	Total	891	384

Not counted	Pratyusha Sumathi	Raw score: 165	Normalised: 71
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From left to right: Tor, Artur, Chia-Man, Pratyusha, Chris, Hugh, Nat, Dinant

An anecdote was Pratyusha losing her phone along with important ID cards in the airfield while towing a glider to the launch point. She spent an hour in the morning desperately looking for it alone, but didn't find it :-(. At the end of flying, we set off to search her phone together. We discovered the app "find your phone" (linked to your google account) that located the GPS location and even activated and rang the phone in "do not disturb" mode. Even that, we were still in a tricky situation since there was

evening flying going on and the GPS location showed that her phone was somewhere in front of the winch! We used man power to look for it in between launches and after a few trials, to our big relief, we found it! For the whole day, Pratyusha was sad and thought she would never see her phone again. We were so glad to see her smile again!

Day 3 – 22nd June 2018

Marc joined us on Day 3 and took off with Dinant in ESB for the first scoring flight of the day, at around the same time as Bonan from CUGC! The sky was all blue, providing little clue to where the thermals were. Marc developed superior skills to feel the thermals and climbed to 5000 ft soon after he took off. In his own words, it was the best flight he'd ever had! He was beaming for the rest of the day! A great start of the day for OUGC!

Later on, we had Tor solo in ESB and Artur in a Junior. At the same time, CUGC had Hugh in a K21, Timo in a K21 and Tomasz in an ASW19. Again, Tor had a great flight and gained a lot of points! Unfortunately, Artur didn't manage to climb away from the winch and had to land relatively soon. Hugh, Timo and Tomasz made the best use of the best conditions of the day.

For some reasons, the launch point was quite busy. It was already past 3pm when it was Pratyusha's turn to fly. (Pratyusha and I flipped a coin to decide who to fly first and I lost it :-() The conditions had already been weakened and it was getting more and more difficult even to stay up. Pratyusha flew with Dinant in ESB. She managed to stay up for exactly 50 minutes in her second



attempt and did quite well! At the same time, Daniel from CUGC had a few launches and managed to stay up for about half an hour in his fourth attempt. After CUGC had enough flying, Artur finally got a chance to fly again in one of their K21s, but no luck as the conditions were very weak.

When it was finally my turn, it was already 5pm. I flew in ESB with Dinant. My first attempt only lasted for 12 minutes, so I decided to have another go. Just when I was about to be launched, a tug came in to land, and then a glider landed in front of me, etc. We joked that it was CUGC's conspiracy to delay my take-off. The beginning of my second attempt didn't go very well. I was just getting lower and lower. Pratyusha and

Marc kept thinking I was about to land. With Marc's lucky soaring hat and Dinant's help, we found a ridiculously weak thermal just when I was about to give up! We climbed at 0.6 kts at the same place over Little Gransden to almost 3000 ft and landed after exactly 50 minutes! I felt amazing being the only glider in the big blue sky! It was so peaceful! At 5 minutes before landing, Dinant took over control for a while and gave me a big surprise that involved a HASSLL check. I am not allowed to describe this further, so the rest is left for imagination. Although I didn't gain many points for my flight, it was still one of my best flights and it absolutely made my day!

For logistical reasons, our best pilot Dinant didn't have his own scoring flight on Day 3 unfortunately :-).

Oxford	Raw score	Normalised		Cambridge	Raw score	Normalised
Marc Galler	198	116		Bonan	177	104
Chia-Man Hung	100	59		Tomasz	237	139
Tor Walberg	184	108		Hugh	164	96
Pratyusha Sumathi	148	87		Timo	156	91
Total	630	370		Total	734	430

End result – Oxford 802 vs Cambridge 814.

We all did our best and I think we all improved our soaring skills during the competition! Given that they have three silver pilots and we only have one, I think we did quite well! Most importantly, we had an amazing time together with CUGC! It was a very close match. Congratulations to CUGC for winning this year's Varsity! I am already looking forward to next year's Varsity!

Big thanks to CUGC for hosting us! Gransden really is a beautiful airfield with great facilities. Also thanks to the instructors Rob, Andy, Pete Warner, Oliver Bosanko and especially Rebecca



who flew with us and gave us valuable tips! On our side, again, thanks Julian for towing ESB! Thanks Artur for renting the car, driving us there and back! Thanks Tor for scoring the flights, discussing it with CUGC to make sure it is fair and writing daily updates! Thanks Pratyusha for dealing with the financial aspect! Thanks Marc for taking all flying related stuffs back to Bicester!

OUGC cannot thank Dinant enough for his hard work in training and coaching the team, in addition to organising and overseeing every aspect of the competition! He put in so many hours a day in advising us on our dodgy thermalling and made our team competitive! He always makes sure everyone flies before he thinks about his own flying. I simply cannot imagine our team without Dinant. We absolutely have to convince him to come back and be our coach again next year!



From left to right: Marc, Artur, Pratyusha, Chia-Man, Tor, Timo, Hugh, Daniel, Bonan, Tomasz, Dinant

Let's see what our coach Dinant has to say:

This year, my plan was to just coach the team, do some check flights and share the instructional load with the instructors CUGC supplied. However, as CUGC's team was much more experienced, the team decided that I should compete as well. As such, I did a competition flight on Thursday. I had the opportunity to fly CUGC's ASW-19. Unfortunately, it was already late in the day and the thermals were weak, so my score wasn't very good. Also, the ASW-19 doesn't climb nearly as well as the K21, Astir or Junior do. Still, it was nice to fly a new type.

CUGC struggled with getting instructors, and only had a BI to fly on Thursday, Rebecca. She flew with Chia-Man and Pratyusha, while I flew with Tor and Nat on this day. I had great flights with both, very interesting to observe the difference in their thermalling techniques. I also did a short soaring check-flight with Artur this day. Friday was blue, and without any CUGC instructors I ended up flying with Marc, Pratyusha and Chia-Man. All did very well considering the conditions, with the latter two especially flying in quite weak blue conditions. I had a great time instructing the team this year, and I'm sure we will reclaim the trophy again next year.