



TEAM X TREME

by MattGERDES



DEAR USHPA MEMBER,

If you've been around for a while, you know I have been, too. OK, not that long, not for ages, not like the grey-bearded-acid-washed-jeans guy sitting under his hang glider or as long as Chris Santacroce, but for a while. I've been kind of busy lately and haven't contributed much to this, my favorite, free flight magazine. But I have ended my short sabbatical at the request of our editor, Mr. Greece, in order to call your attention to a hot new trend in airborne sports. USHPA's editor emailed and asked me to tell you all about speed flying—the winter kind, where you use skis and stuff. I said yes, because really, who better to do so?

So I'll get right to the point: Speed Flying, also known as Speed Riding, is awesome. Really, totally radical. Speed Flying is the hottest thing since BluBlockers and Beanie Babies. Speed Flying has limitless potential to make you rich, famous, and very sexy. Speed Flying is a big WIN!

To be honest, that's mostly hype. Humans are an earthbound species. We walk or roll around and only fly when we have to, for the most part. Just a small percentage of the world's population want to fly for fun in any aircraft, and only a small percentage of those people actually want to fly with an aircraft so flimsy and light that you can carry it on your back for five minutes without getting tired. This group—paraglider pilots—love one of the world's smallest sports. Now, take these members of the world's smallest sport, and find the percentage of us who are really into skiing and want to fly fast and low in the mountains in the wintertime. The cross-section of the population you now have engages in a sport whose number of participants is infinitesimally small. That's speed flying!

Fringe or not, speed flying is here to stay. It is not going to be banned, and if it is, we will still do it. Companies will continue to make speed wings, and pilots will continue to discover this truly amazing activity. Some of us will always be attracted to the





feeling of skimming terrain at high speeds, with or without skis. Sure, it's not everyone's cup of tea, but we love it. The thought of floating just over the hill while parked in 30mph winds is what gets some of us out of bed in the morning.

Whether or not it's what's in your bag already, allow me to break down the average pilot's progression in the sport.

SPEED FLYING FOR BEGINNERS

If you already fly paragliders and/or like skiing, then you will be a beginner speed flyer for about five minutes. So relax and

enjoy it, and try not to rush your progression. It's really pretty simple: you pull one, and it goes left. You pull the other, and it goes right. Pull both to stop, sort of. That may sound ridiculous, and you might think I am joking, but I'm not. It really is that simple. You need to get used to how much altitude you will lose in a turn and what your glide angle is. Launching and landing are a cinch if you understand the above—meaning, you need to choose a proper launch area based on your glide angle, and you need to find a nice landing based on your understanding of how much altitude you will lose getting there (glide angle, again) and setting up (altitude loss in turns). It's basic, see?

SPEED FLYING FOR INTERMEDIATES

There are no Intermediate Speed Flyers. Once you can launch and fly and land, you're an expert. See below.

SPEED FLYING FOR EXPERTS

Now that you're an expert, you're instantly ready to go pro.

SPEED FLYING FOR PROS

Going pro is the most exciting part of your speed flying career. You might have only started speed flying yesterday, but that's OK. The sport is so new, and there are so few people doing it, that no one is capable of discerning your skill level or even determining what skill is. Just the fact that... "Yer doin that thing we saw on youtube..." is enough to make you an absolute pro. I would also highly recommend becoming a dealer for a brand of speed flying wings, or better yet, an importer! At this point in your career, a





few pieces of equipment should be considered mandatory:

Helmet Camera. Absolutely crucial. If you aren't sharing your flights online, you're not a speed flyer. Get yours from www.GoProDepot.com

YouTube account. Again, this is obligatory. Watching your video play-counter go up is like watching your bank balance magically increase, except different.

An attitude. You're not just a paraglider pilot or a skydiver any more. You're a ground-launching-speed-flying-almost-BASE-jumping-hardcore-Speed Flyer / Speed Rider. Feel free to make snide comments on www.pgforum.com and start looking down on normal paraglider pilots who don't speed fly. They're fully lame, anyway.

Sponsorship. This part is easy, but it's still important. It doesn't matter if you only get sponsored by a company that makes gym socks; you need a logo to put on your wing as well as at the beginning and end of your online videos. If you try for days and still can't get sponsored, consider paying out of pocket to put a cool company's logo on your wing. When they see the super-sick footage on your YouTube channel, they'll come to their senses and write you a check.

In summary, Speed Flying really is a simple activity with hitherto unseen possibilities for rapid progression, due to its "extreme" allure and basic simplicity, not to mention ease. Speedflying, like all other airsports, is best learned by careful practice and slow learning. If you have a question about the conditions, or practices of speedflying it is best to refrain from taking uncalculated risks. 🇺🇸

CAUTION

Speedflying is a new sport requiring its own set of skills and experience. While speedflying is similar to paragliding, USHPA has not developed a training program for speedflying and USHPA does not offer instructor certification or pilot ratings for speedflying at this point in time. Those interested in this sport are encouraged to exercise care as they develop their speedflying skills as a pioneer in this sport.

Matt G likes skiing, BASE jumping, paragliding, and speed flying. He has a blog just like everyone else's, except funnier and with far cooler videos, at www.mattg.com. He wrote this article while in Pakistani airspace. Seriously.



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