

## JANUARY 2012 CONDOR CORNER

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I thought I would devote this Condor Corner article to a description of the many online Condor contests available these days. Online cross-country contest flying has been the heart and soul of Condor from the beginning some seven years ago, and the developers could never have dreamed how successful it would be. It is not at all unusual to have more registered competitors in one online contest than there are cross-country competitors in the entire U.S. The last time anyone tried to count active racing pilots in the U.S., I believe the number they came up with was about 350 pilots who had competed in at least one contest that year. The 2012 Condor Sky Battle Cup that runs Nov 13 2011 to April 1, 2012 had 442 registered contestants as of November 1, 2011, and it's just one of many contests. Another 'small' contest run over the period November 5 – December 31, 2011 has 120 competitors registered. If you can no longer remember if that big pile of snow in your driveway really contains a glider trailer, then maybe its time to think about getting a copy of Condor and getting started with online cross-country racing.

Although it didn't start out that way seven years ago, the many thousands of active Condor pilots have diversified into distinct flying styles. There are many Condor-ites who fly just for fun in the many online 'free flight' servers. Free flight servers don't have a defined task (the task length shown on the server list is 0km), and they generally stay open 24/7. If you just want to fly with a buddy somewhere in Europe, you can both just jump onto the same server at the same time and fly. Another group seems to fly mostly aerobatics in the Fox glider – there have been some amazing YouTube videos generated by this group (search for 'condor acro fox' on YouTube, or watch this one at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4l8oxhq1Yi8>). Keep in mind when you watch one of these videos that each plane is being piloted by a real person in real time – no way could I do this kind of precision flying! Another group is the 'back to basics' crowd that believes competition was ruined with the advent of GPS and flight recorders. This group regularly hosts contests where the only nav system is a compass and a 'paper' map, and turnpoints are recorded by taking a snapshot down your left wingtip. I've tried a few of these, and I have concluded that I'm not very good at that, either. Then there are the 'arcade' guys, who set up short tasks with multiple narrow windows along steep mountains with 30kt winds perpendicular to the ridges. These guys fly right at redline just inches from terra booma for the entire task, trying to peel just another second off the best time. I like these guys, because next to them I look pretty sane☺. And then there's my crowd – the serious XC racers. This group is more likely to fly 300km tasks with 2-3kt lift to 3000 agl, sparse clouds, and ridges that may or may not (more probably not) work. Tasks where water ballast may (or may not) turn out to be worthwhile. Often tasks are close replicas of ones flown in major contests in RL, like the recent 'virtual WGC' that mirrored an actual WGC (without the bad weather). Although I think of Condor as a way to improve my RL flying, I'm beginning to suspect there are pilots in 'my crowd' who think of RL flying as a way to improve their Condor skills☺.

For the remainder of this article I will try to provide a flavor for the major races you might enjoy in the 'serious racing' genre.

**Monday Night Soaring** (<http://www.gliderracing.com>): The Monday Night Soaring (MNS) race series is the Methuselah of online Condor races, as it has been running continuously every Monday evening since early 2005. MNS was created in 2005 by yours truly to give U.S. Condor pilots (all 5 of us) somewhere to fly on weekday evenings U.S. time. Most Condor races are held in the evenings on European time, which means about 1:30 – 2:30 pm on the U.S. east coast and even earlier in the west – not very convenient if you have a real job. I decided to try and host a race at a time convenient for U.S. pilots, and it quickly expanded to support two different races – an 'East Coast' race at 7pm EST/EDT and a 'West Coast' race at 10pm EST/EDT. MNS tasks are fun and realistic, and beginners are welcomed and helped as much as possible. Ironically, the MNS series has been so successful that the Europeans decided they wanted to play too, so there is now a 'MNS Europe' race every Monday evening European time – go figure!

**Sky Battle 2012** (<http://www.condor-club.eu> → Competitions): This contest series is a reprise of the very successful Sky Battle 2007/8 and 2008/9 race series (it was not held in 2009/10). The race series hosts two races per week (on Thursday and Sunday) from November 2011 through April 2012. This is a well organized event, and even boasts a short video 'teaser'. See the screenshot below and <http://www.condorsoaring.com> for more information. As of this writing in early November 2011, there were more than 450 pilots (i.e. more than the total number of U.S. pilots who flew at least one competition last season) registered. A typical race will have well over 100 pilots flying in 4-6 servers (each server is limited to 32 pilots) making each race easily the largest single-class competitive soaring event in the world – and they do it twice a week for 18 weeks! The best 21 results of each pilot will be used to rank pilots, so a single landout or crash isn't completely disastrous (but note that crashes are discouraged – there is a sliding penalty scale that ends with complete disqualification for 8 or more crashes). There are no prizes, but top pilots become household legends in the worldwide Condor community, which by this time is probably larger than the worldwide RL soaring population.

October 17 2011

Sky Battle Cup 2012



Starting November 13th, the Sky Battle Cup 2012 (SBC 2012) aims to recreate the spirit and ambience of the legendary acclaimed Lowlands Cup and Speedbattler Cup. Two races per week, every Sunday and every Thursday evening. Five months of racing. The 21 best results of each pilot will be selected for final scoring and ranking. SBC 2012 will rely on the best available tools (Condor Club for scoring and DSHelper for CondorSim.fr servers management) and receives sustained support from the major Condor community actors.

Whether you are a seasoned pilot eager to compete with the best pilots or a newbie wishing to learn very quickly and make friends, don't miss this unique opportunity. Several hundreds of pilots are expected in the sky.

Register NOW for FREE! Flying a task on a full server with 32 pilots is the best fun in Condor!

Many prizes to win for the winners but also for the more assiduous pilots!

[Link](#) for registration on the CC.

[Link](#) to get more information on the competition.

Bande Annonce Sky Battle Cup 2012



**Fatra Gliding Cup** (<http://fatra.virtualsoaring.eu/>): This is a 'small' single-class (15m, my favorite) competition, featuring tasks from the very real 'Fatraglide11' completion ('Fatraglide' is a real-life international spring gliding competition focused predominately on mountain flying in the northern Slovakia, Poland and Czech republic areas). There will be only 5 racing days in this contest, spread over 5 Saturdays from November 5 to December 3, and all 5 days count toward the total score. It will be over by the time you read this column, but there will be others just like it. If you want to find out how I did, start from the bottom of the scoresheet and work your way up, looking for 'TA1' (Although I now score fairly well in U.S. Condor and RL soaring contests, I have a long way to go in international contests). As of the time of this writing in early November 2011, there are 129 contestants registered (but only 4 Americans; Errol Cedric (CE3), Tomasz Rogacki (RT), me (TA1), and Dave Leonard (ZL)). You might recognize that last name – Long-time Condor flyer Dave Leonard will represent the U.S. in the 15m class as part of the U.S. Soaring Team at the 2012 WGC in Uvalde, Texas.



**Soaring On Heaven** (<http://www.soaringonheaven.com/en/index.php>): This is the best (IMHO) of the Condor 24/7 flying format race series. You can fly the task anytime, by yourself or with friends/competitors. You are automatically scored immediately after finishing, and you can compare your result to all others on the SoaringOnHeaven (SOH) website. Since everyone flies the same task in identical weather conditions, the comparison of scores is on an 'apples-to-apples' basis. You can fly a task multiple times, but this information also shows up on the scoresheet (i.e. getting the top score after 100 tries isn't all that impressive, while being in the top 10 on the first try is). I like this series because the tasks are long enough to reduce the luck factor, realistic enough to be good training, and varied enough to keep it interesting. There are separate tasks for Standard, 15m, 18m, and Open class gliders.



Well, that's about all I have space for this month. Next time (March 2012 issue) I plan to talk about the results of my first full season of 'professional' XC instruction using Condor. In the meantime, if you are a soaring pilot and haven't tried Condor yet, please place your left index finger on your right wrist and check for a pulse – you probably won't find one 😊! Seriously though, where else can you find such an incredible soaring fix for so little time, effort and expense, and without actually having to bulldoze away that pile of snow to extract your glider trailer?