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Saturday, February 18, 2006

## An Epic Journey...

For those of you who shared any part of the journey with me since my ill fated participation at World Team 2004... you will know exactly what it means to me to be typing this entry to the blog after the hoots of "WE DID IT" have begun to fade into the history books!

It has been one hell of a journey (with the happiest of endings I might add), shared with the best of friends old and new.

And to proudly prove it, my full set of photos are finally online!  
<http://albums.photo.epson.com/j/AlbumIndex?u=4336344&a=32067824&f=>

The evidence is really there this time, I can hardly believe it!

Everyone told me that I was as much a member of World Team 2004 as anyone else, despite the fact that I was forced to head home early due to injury. But to me, being part of the team was never just about being selected. It wasn't even about the record. It was about being among the people that I may otherwise never have met, working together as a team to make the improvements needed and laughing at the antics that marked the British presence in indelible ink. It was about celebrating the achievement of a team that included many more than the 400 people actually linked in freefall and soaking up the unique atmosphere that is all of the above!

It won't surprise you at all to know just how relieved my mum and dad were to receive my call after the very last jump in Bangkok. This weblog also meant a huge amount to them and they have asked me to pass on thanks to everyone who helped keep them up to date and hence reassure them that all was still well!

Quite fitting therefore that Craig Poxon set up the blog after being the one who had to fight the insurance company for me in 2004 while doing his very best to keep a 'less than happy' Caroline believing she was going to be ok and wasn't being deliberately poisoned by the hospital (morphine is lots of fun)...!

Without sounding too much like I'm accepting an oscar... (although, DAMN IT, we should all get one for that 400-way performance)!!! ;).. I owe my place on the 400-way to my parents unflinching support. They looked after me for months after 2004, worried about me beyond the norm for a lot longer and will probably continue to do so as long as I keep skydiving. Their support aided the recovery and belief that enabled me to get back in the air when that wasn't always certain.

I can only imagine their horror when I announced I hadn't quite finished chasing the dream! Yet still their support didn't fail. Not once did they question my continued participation in the sport, or whether my decision to return was the right (or even fair) one to them! They had every right to!

With the memories of the jump into Sanam Luang in 2004... the 2006 mass jump into the new Bangkok airport was the hardest ride to altitude I have made since Milko took me back in the air after the accident. And while it was something I had to do... that didn't stop a few tears on the way up, or as I exited the BT67. Pete Knight was a star in that aircraft by the way (just in case anyone wondered why he was squeezing my hand so tight)!!



The photo above of Kathy Leslie and myself was taken just after landing on the final jump of World Team 2006. Kathy, who was also injured in 2004 (much more so than

2006-01-22  
 2006-01-29  
 2006-02-05  
 2006-02-12

myself) was next to me in the Bangkok hospital ward. We made the effort to keep in touch after we returned home, so I knew Kathy had started jumping again. I was over the moon when I discovered we would be on the 400-way attempts together. I honestly can't think of anything more fitting than to find myself landing and packing next to her and Fred after that last jump. It was great to finally share the skies with you Kathy!

Thanks to everyone for making the dream finally come true.

# posted by Caroline Hughes @ 5:42 PM 0 comments

Thursday, February 16, 2006

### BJ on Skydive Radio after WT06

BJ interviewed, after WT06, on Skydive Radio. Interesting when they ask him about future plans for World Team...seems he thinks it's tough to go bigger BUT 500 possible with bail-out oxygen, but 444 is a good target(!) . He also wonders if Thailand would go for it again unless the Thai 400 record is broken first elsewhere...

[http://www.skydiveradio.com/show\\_files/sr28\\_02\\_15\\_06.mp3](http://www.skydiveradio.com/show_files/sr28_02_15_06.mp3)

# posted by Gordy @ 1:41 PM 0 comments

Tuesday, February 14, 2006

### Swoop's handiwork

Hello? Is this thing on? Swoop took this awesome picture of our sector:



Prices are:

A4 ish £12

A3 ish £24

24x30 ish £55

Prices include UK postage. Cheques payable to: Gary Wainwright

124 Valeside Gardens, Colwick, Nottingham, NG4 2EP

# posted by Craig Poxon @ 9:35 AM 0 comments

Sunday, February 12, 2006

### That is all!

The flight back from Udon to Bangkok was uneventful. It was nice being in a proper passenger plane for a change! The coach ride from from the airport back to the Windsor Suites Hotel was less so. We are not sure whether it is returning from the cooler north or it is generally hotter and more humid in Bangkok than when we left, but it certainly felt like it. The air conditioning was seemingly ineffective and a lot of us were suffering. The coach driver seemed to think that the epitomy in good driving style was to stamp and pump the brake very vigourously at every opportunity in order to ensure that no daylight appeared between him and the coach in front. Poor Nutty wasn't feeling too great but made it through. Even the most motion sickness resistant of us were please to get off the bus. Most people relaxed in and around the hotel and Bangkok for the rest of the day.

The next day, Saturday, was the last official event, the mass demo. Breakfast was from 5.30am with the coaches departing at 6.15-6.30am for the military airbase at Don Muang airport in Bangkok. So yet another early start but this would be the last one! Hurrah! We had a police escort, which is pretty cool. That's been quite common over here, usually on the way to places but not so much when returning, and in our drab military coaches we must look like a very strange procession of

farangs indeed. We arrived at the old military airport. Some of the new guys amongst us made the mistake of bringing extra stuff that wasn't really necessary such as rig and helmet bags. These had to be left on the buses, hopefully to be retrieved when the buses picked us up from the dropzone at the new airport.

Our numbers were more than doubled by the local Thai jumpers (with their scary looking old rigs) as well as a few expats along with our sector specifically, Jim and Jimmy from Scotland and also Justin who is now living in Hong Kong. As you can imagine when trying to herd 960 cats, there was a little confusion but we eventually got sorted. There was a photocall, where we wore our blue and yellow "warm-up" suits. And in the rapidly rising temperature and sunshine they certainly did warm us up! This was going to be a sweaty day! The Thais seem to be adapted to wearing a lot more clothing than the foreigners; I don't know how they do it. The rest of us were either rolling the arms and sleeves up and down, or whipping the suits on and off for the photos.

We picked up our streamers, yards and yards of coloured tape wrapped up in a bum-bag type affair. These would be strapped around our waists and deployed in the air once it was safe to do so. Then the fleet began to arrive. I think the final roster was 8 Hercs (one kindly loaned from Singapore), 3 (or was it 4) BT-67 (the turbine C-47 (DC-3 with a cargo door)) and the G-222. It was an awesome site to see so many planes lined up for us. They certainly have the capacity for a 500-way!! Initially we thought we were going to be sharing the Singaporean Herc with some Thai jumpers on the very last plane to pass which would have meant we wouldn't have the risk of anyone coming through us, but as it turned out we got a BT-67 to ourselves. In fact, it was the same plane I'd jumped when we did the fun loads back at Udon Thani (so I can't add a new tail number to my logbook :- ( yes, I know it's sad!).

We had a line up and a run out. As we exited in a long stream, we alternated the direction in which people would track off the line of flight, as well as alternating the degree at which we would track (45 and 90 degrees) to spread people out, and also waves of deployment heights between 2500 and 3500 feet. We had a quick couple of pictures taken with the crew and then we boarded. We sat in the plane for a while slowing stewing in our boil-in-the-bag suits. It was only once we



were in the air that we started to cool down with the air rushing into the cabin from the open cargo door. Our exit height was to be 7900 feet. The exit wasn't particularly tight and by the time they'd finished larking about Milko, Hannah and Swoop were pretty deep, but made it back.



I must say the freefall was pretty disappointing (although the view of the huge, and currently inactive, airport whilst tracking was awesome) as I didn't have to dodge any canopies in freefall and was looking forward to that particular excitement! As one of the last BT-67 loads which went before the Hercs, our airspace was pretty clear. During the middle of the canopy ride, the first Herc dropped and the sky got quite busy but were well out of our way. I tried to add some excitement by swooping the top of the flags and the portrait of the king but when I managed not to hit them and land just the other side of the "crowd line". The crowd went mild :-P I packed where I landed constantly keeping an eye to the sky and half-expecting a Thai accuracy jumper on his foil to use my rig as an impromptu pad. Despite slightly deeper spots and too much running under canopy I managed to somehow not be landed on.

Once packed, gear was dumped in a cordoned off area (although not shielded from the blazing sun). We were treated to an airdisplay from some jets (PC9??? and an F-16) as well as some acrobatic displays from a prop plane. Whilst the jets were very impressive, they did fly very low directly over the spectators. They don't seem to have the concept of a crowd line over here. We once again donned our tracksuits and stood in the baking sun for what seemed to be a very long time whilst the local dignitaries made some speeches, which weren't translated. The sector captains collected our medals on our behalf. There was some singing, which I can only

assume to be the National and the King's anthems, accompanied by a military band, which the Thais joined in with gusto.

Oops, forgot to mention that this the demo was Caroline Allen's 999th jump! Or was it her 1000th? She never logged her first tandem.... :-) Also the press wanted to interview the ever awesome Taz, but because they didn't catch her landing on tape, they changed their mind :-)

It was then time to depart for our free lunch which was being hosted at the bus depot for the new airport. I must say this seem to be a bizarre venue for a lunch but it worked out quite well with it's large covered areas and open halls. The food was devoured as if a plague of locusts had descended on it, since it had been quite a while since breakfast! Local mobile vendors had wheeled up, plugging the gap with sweet and savoury food. Then it was back on the bus to the hotel and we were finally released.

More relaxing, drinking and partying was done but a lot of people were preparing to leave. There seem to be 3 main tranches of departures, for the Brits at least. The first lot left at 10.30pm last night, the next lot have just left at 10.30am and a few more of us are off at 8.30pm tonight. It's quite sad really. We've had a really good group and we've all bonded really well and it's been really hard to say goodbye. I know that I have made a lot of new good friends here and I'm sure everyone else has too, as well as bolstered existing friendships.

Well, I guess I should wrap this up now. I'm rambling because I have time to kill but it could be spent more productively by packing and spending the rest of my day by the pool! This will probably be my last post to the blog. Hopefully Gordy, Chester or Caroline will post a little bit more, probably with some pictures. Just wanted to thank you all again for you kind comments and unending support. It really helped us all here. It's been an awesome adventure and I'm just glad that I didn't f%\$k up (well, not enough to be noticed too much :-P)! I look forward to boring you all personally with stories of World Team '06!

# posted by Craig Poxon @ 3:49 AM 0 comments

Saturday, February 11, 2006

### Oops... forgot to mention

In case anyone didn't realise, our very own Taz Causer is now the proud holder of 3 current FAI world records.

1. FS 400 way largest formation
2. FS Women's Formation record 151 way
3. CF world record 85 way

I believe she is the only one in the world to be able to make this claim... :D

Nice one chick!

C.x

# posted by Caroline Hughes @ 10:22 AM 0 comments

Thursday, February 09, 2006

### Wow. Incredible. Just unbelievable.

Hey Guys,

Just a quick post as I have a little time to kill before going off to the Farewell dinner. I really cannot believe the last 24 hours. It's just been awesome. I have to keep pinching myself to make sure it isn't a dream. I don't think I will ever forget yesterday. Even if we hadn't have got the record, it would still have been one of the most outstanding days ever; three consistent and growing dives bigger than anything before. I actually thought the second dive was better than the third; it had more of that special "feel" to it. Being on the forth row whacker, I've set an alarm at 10,000 feet as it "better get on with it warning". On the second dive, I was inline for ages before it sounded. On the third dive I was only just in as it went off. On the second dive everything felt good enough to have a little tiny peek around, and everything looked good. On the third one I could still see people building on the other side and I was having to fly harder all the way until the end. I felt really bad for the last whacker to build on the 399 way. It was building and moving forward the whole time with the person tracking the end of the whacker but only getting in as Tony released the pilot chute. I thought that being consistent for a third dive was going to be tough; it would only take one minor screw-up to ruin everything, but it didn't happen and it was perfect. To me that is almost more impressive than building the 400-way itself.

The atmosphere on the ground was great. I spent ages just looking around, soaking

it up and relishing it. The mood was awesome, but I was trying to be cautious until the official word came out. Lots of rumours were going around and then it was announced. It was just the most amazing feeling and I'll never forget it.

The party went on until the very late hours of this morning. We were due to leave the hotels for the DZ at 1, and even with that late start, I didn't get much sleep! Only about half the sector made it to the dropzone! Today we were visited by Air Chief Marshall Chalit who is the RTAF Commander-in-Chief, and head of the Thai Organizing Committee. He arrived in his small passenger jet and addressed us. He was very warmly received! He also came to see a little of what we do. Some impromptu dives were put together. I took part in a 47 way organised by Kate Cooper, which I think completed (I'm the second white from the right), with a pretty minimal dirt dive, which I was quite impressed by. It was nice to relax again and not have to worry about the stress of a 400-way and just have some fun! Five loads were due to take off and drop in short succession, but the word is that one of that didn't get to go because the aircraft was pressurised again, causing another load of AADs to fire! :-)



So we are off to the celebration banquet this evening, which is good because I'm just starting to get the post hangover munchies! All the bags are now in reception ready to be bussed back to Bangkok but we have been told to take our rigs and sponsored clothing as carry-on on the aircraft for the mass demo, which isn't until Saturday, which is slightly worrying that they think there is the potential for stuff to go missing for that length of time. Sector 11 have drawn the short straw again and are on the early flight, but we do get to go on the airbus this time.

I'd better wrap this up now. Sorry if I haven't been in touch with many of you personally but I'll catch up with you soon. We all thank you for all the messages, comments, texts and emails we have been receiving. They have been incredibly encouraging and supportive so thanks again. It seems the blog has been going down quite well and we are glad you like it. It's not over yet though, as we still have a few more days and the mass demo to do!!!!

Craig

# posted by Craig Poxon @ 10:54 AM 0 comments

Wednesday, February 08, 2006

## Pictures and video...

Our first 400-way attempt had plenty of problems in the base, so everybody had to hang out while people flew underneath us and got out of the way. [Here's](#) the video with short interviews with members from Sector 11 just after that jump from February 3rd. We decided to only post it now so that it would not create unnecessary worries amongst our friends/family.

Eventually we got better and better until yesterday we did [THE WORLD RECORD JUMP!!!](#) (freefall video link as seen from whacker line 3 in sector 11). Thanks Guillaume for sharing! Check out Gordy during the tracking. He is the leader for tracking team B!

And here are some photos:

[Pictures from yesterday \(as promised\)](#)

[Pictures from today \(celebration\)](#) (sorry that I appear on so many of them - the typical self portrait pic. If I get other people's pics I'll take down some of mine - promise)

[The official photos and videos from the World Team site](#)

# posted by Chester @ 9:33 PM 3 comments

## We did it - 400-way !

We did it!!!! Yeehah!!

400-way complete, grip perfect, FAI rules, pics, video. We did it!

What an awesome day!

1st jump a 370-way, 2nd jump a 399-way with 1 person within a hands distance of the grip. Then straight back up for a 3rd jump. All was smooth, steady, calm, neat and we held a complete 400-way for 4.9 seconds!!!! (edited afterwards: it was

officially 4.25 seconds apparently)

I'm half cut already and drinking champagne from the bottle as I type. Every other record I've done was on the final day, but this time was the most perfect Wednesday, the most perfect skydiving day, the most perfect day I've ever had. As BJ Worth said after jump number two: "the best thing about only getting a 399-way, is that we get to go up and do it again, kinda like a multiple orgasm". And he was so right!!!! The 399-way was actually a 400-way with everyone slot perfect but the final grip docked a second or so after the 1st pullout in the base reached for the hackey. So we kinda did two back-to-back 400-ways.

Back to the beer now. Thanks for all the messages of support. They have meant a lot and we feel that we've shared the journey with all of you. Thanks for being there - and we all wish you all could be here to join us right now - we want to buy you beers - but hope you raise a glass tonight.

That is all! (Dane's now infamous sign-off on the tannoy).

Thanks again

Gordy and all of sector 11.

# posted by Gordy @ 11:13 AM 5 comments

## So close! - quick update after 2 jumps on Wed 8th

It's now 14.15 on Weds 8th Feb, and there's magic in the air.

We've done two jumps so far today:

1st jump, 400-way attempt. Built to 370, flying flat, smooth and looking sooooo sweet. Sector 11 wasn't complete with a couple of grips very close - but missing - on line 5. New unofficial world record, but we want the 400-way.

2nd jump, 400-way attempt. We were at 25,000ft! We haven't heard officially yet, but the rumour is it was built to either 398 or 399 or thereabouts, but as I say the judges are working and we aint been told yet. Sector 11 was complete for the first time - and complete with a neat, tight, smooth, flat, clean, awesome whacker group that was held for 9 seconds - and 9 seconds feels like forever when you are looking across these huge formations. As I looked through the centre of the formation from my slot in line 3 EVERYBODY was there around the float side of the formation. Rumour is that sector 3, the French sector, were all there or thereabouts, but just short of a grip or two. Another new unofficial record, but we still want the 400-way.

Kirk Verner from Airspeed has been added to sector 11's line 5. Rod's pilot chute got dislodged in the line up and Kirk refolded and re-stowed it on a 1 minute call. I landed by the spectators after jump 2 and it took me 20 mins to get on a truck as I signed endless caps, t-shirts, chests, arms, books, even 50-Bhat notes!

The vibes are amazing. Two absolutely awesome skydives, and today - for the first time for this event - we are going for a 3rd jump. Let's hope we make it count!!! Take off will be about 4pm.

Send the positive vibes and keep everything crossed please. Game on...

Gordon

# posted by Gordy @ 7:15 AM 0 comments

