

Go for Goal, a task based educational fly in was the first of it's kind that we were aware of, certainly in Australia, an "Uncompetition" to be precise.

Loosely based around a competition format, however, with a focus on Education and Pilot Development, not on racing or distance.

Would it work, was it what pilots wanted, would pilots come. When we announced the event we didn't know, however, after the first event was fully subscribed in less than a day we felt compelled to hold a "Series 2" the following weekend.

Then came the concern, would we get it right, would we deliver what our target pilots, PG2 to PG4 pilots were looking for, the challenge to get it right intensified.

Rather than write a full review of how we as organisers viewed the event, we'd like to thank one of the many great pilots who attended, Jason Neatherway for his review.

Go For Goal 2022 Review

By Jason Neatherway

As Go For Goal Series Two comes to an end the chat group chimes consistently with praise and appreciation from pilots having reached new milestones in their flying and come away with a wealth of information to contribute to their flying capabilities and safety. Go For Goal was a new event, the brainchild of experienced CFI Greg Hurst, Aussie paragliding and hang-gliding legends Gareth Carter and Rohan Taylor, and Rob Couper – who many pilots know as one of the most well organised paragliding administrator and community advocate around. Go For Goal (GFG) is designed and run as un-competition, focused on mentoring PG2 through to PG4 in skills for paragliding, both on the ground and in the air but with task-based activities for the flying schedule. The event was held at the Corryong site in Victoria, just west of Kosciuszko National Park. The desire for this type of event was clear from the start, as tickets sold out in less than 24 hours, leaving organizers compelled to schedule a second series for the following week.

As a PG3 pilot, still new to the sport, I was stoked to attend both series (each in part) and met pilots from as far south as Tasmania and as far north as Townsville. The information in the leadup to the event came in thick and fast, with comprehensive "how-to" guides for setting up navigation equipment

for waypoints and loading recommended screen layouts in XCTrack and Flyskyhy. Creating a good foundation for pilots to come to the event prepared.

The daily routine was structured with some similarity to a comp event, but each of those daily routines were approached with education in mind. We would meet in the Corryong RSL and get briefed on the weather for the day, with mentors showing how they would use popular tools for wind, thermal strength, top of lift etc. Participants – or “Goalers” as we were called – had the opportunity to ask questions and appreciate the decision-making process. We could begin to understand how conditions effected our task for the day and the schedule. Event directors soon realized the Goalers needed to know why the heck they were sitting in the community hall and not on launch at 11 am. Clearly a heavy load of eagerness had been brewing in all pilots over the wet year and earlier COVID period. On the flip side, Goalers soon realized the afternoon was the best time to get flying underway at Corryong, so the mornings learning and preparing on the ground were all part of getting the most out of the day.

The morning activity also included a route plan for the day. Mentors explained their task planning and then gave tuition on building a competition task in flight instruments with waypoints, cylinders, start of speed section, end of speed section and goal. Goalers became proficient in loading tasks into their instruments, both manually and through sharing tools and learnt that the shortest path may not be best. We had to inspect and visualize an effective route to each waypoint that may be supported by the terrain, thermal triggers and also considered the changing wind forecast.

There were also daily reviews with “cheers” and “challenges”. In GFG, the goal was never really at a grid reference on a map. It was to improve a competency or take that next step in those smaller milestones. So, each day we shared and celebrated those that took their 1st thermal or flew away from the hill or showed tenacity in coming back from early landing. But with any feedback cycle we also needed to learn from our collective mistakes. We would listen and learn to things that didn’t go too well on the previous day from launch safety, safety and efficiency in gaggle flying or working as a team on glide. It seemed we weren’t always so good at leaving together or would end up a line of ducklings rather than spreading out to cover more air. Feedback was contributed from event committee, mentors and from the field of Goalers and reciprocated with applause, chocolates, and prizes.

Finally, off to launch, well briefed and each with a personal goal in mind. We organised carpooling up to launch supported by retrieve vehicles from the event after landing or for a re-fly. Flying conditions were generally good with some days stronger than others, some Goalers getting off to a good start and some finding the LZ early. But as Rohan reminded us “That sounds like XC!”. Mentors were marked with a streamers and intermingled with the Goalers for guidance in the air, across waypoints. Tim Marshal and Zane Priebbenow were notable mentors supporting both series, along with many more senior pilots, climbing and descending repeatedly to help mark thermals and provide oversight and safety. Many of us achieved much more than we have before and certainly more than we would flying on our own. For those lucky or skilled enough reach goal, there was the customary “goal beers” or “bubbles”.

In the afternoons or weaker days, pilots also got the opportunity to exercise skills on short flights. Turning the humble “sledie” into an opportunity to go through big ears, speed bar, big ears and speed bar or some pilots took the opportunity to have a CFI observe them perform asymmetric or frontal collapse as skill demonstration needed for PG5 progression.

As much as we love the flying we also love hanging out with like minded folks, just crazy enough to propel themselves off a mountain suspended from a bit of cloth. So needless to say there was a heap of memorable times around the “Clack-Clack” caravan park or local pub, telling stories, having a laugh or taking cocktails from the crazy Tasmanians. In general, just appreciating the comradery and the benefit of having a new flying buddy or a contact at that site you always wanted to visit.

For me personally, I had a PB for XC, had my first experience following cloud lift, enjoyed the ease of flying in a supported activity and finally made friends with my speed bar! I loved being able to see a noticeable difference in how often I used bar and how it improved my ability to move through different phases of flight.

Hopefully my recount of the inaugural Go For Goal serves to encourage more Goalers and mentors to be involved in the future and to congratulate the directors and mentors on a fantastic event, a tribute to their time, hard work, knowledge and sense of community. So, if you missed out, make sure one of your next paragliding goals is to be a part of a Go For Goal event.

Many thanks to Jason for his article, to the pilots who made Go for Goal such a positive, encouraging, fun time. This is why we hope to build on the concept, improve and refine it and, plan the next Go for Goal. And, of course huge thanks to NSW Hang Gliding & Paragliding Association who were a major contributor and supporter, Cross Country Magazine and Ozone for their generous support, and the people and township of Corryong who welcomed and assisted us for both events.