

Millennium Cup - Round 3.
Queanbeyan - 18 August, 2002.

For many years Australia lead the world in the field of radio astronomy, and it is still up with the leaders. In the early post-war years Bernard Mills FRS, head of Astrophysics at Sydney University, designed a new type of radio telescope, called the Mills Cross. A one mile long version was built near Canberra, and commenced operation in 1954. It was to become the pre-eminent instrument of its day. Though the One-Mile Mills Cross is no longer in service, the Molonglo Observatory Synthesis Telescope (MOST) was constructed by modifying its east-west arm, and continues to provide valuable astronomical observations today.

What has this got to do with a two metre thermal soaring competition? Not much, except that the Mills Cross is such an obvious landmark that it is shown on every road map of that vicinity. The QMAC flying field is located in the paddock next to it, and so is very easy to find.



Some of the competitors, setting up, after the turnarounds were changed.

There were 23 competitors, about half of whom were locals.

The weather was perfect. The sky was clear apart from some fluffy cumulus clouds, and the wind was very light, and variable in direction. In fact the only problem was

that we had to turn around the launching direction several times before the breeze decided which way it wanted to blow. Even so, during the morning, at least half the launches were downwind, which makes for hard work when you are hand towing, even using a pulley. It was quite cool early, and the thermals were very weak until about midday. Thus it was in the morning that the event was won and lost, with those who could handle the light conditions and downwind launches coming out on top. After the lunch break thermals were both more plentiful and stronger, and achieving the six minute target time became much easier.

The locals claim that, except for a windy period in November, the weather is like this all year. If this is true, it is a glider pilots' paradise. Come to think of it, I flew in a competition at Belconnen, which is not far away, a couple of months previously, and conditions on that day were very similar.

Don Farrar severely damaged his very nice Sagitta 600 when he launched it with the wrong memory selected on his computer transmitter. The result was that both servos were reversed. By the time he worked out what was wrong it was too late to save the situation.

Klaus Weiss was flying a brand new Spirit, the ARF version, that he had completed only hours before. He made one of the better scores in round one, but had trouble seeing the model. For the next few rounds he substituted the brighter coloured wing of his old Spirit. Late in the day the Spirit's tailplane came loose in flight and full up elevator provided just sufficient control to get it down safely. Klaus finished the day flying his Sagitta 600. He claimed this model is a "dog", and then proceeded to use it to make a near perfect score for the last round.

Peter Sikora has been flying a very nice model of his own design in two metre events this year. Its layout resembles the Sagitta 600, but it has a fibreglass fuselage with slip on nose cone, and veneered foam wings. A kit for this design is available. John Kinlay's sailplane was built from this kit, and looked very smart in a bright yellow colour scheme. It is surprisingly light for its strength and method of construction, and flew very well, taking second place.



The PSI of Peter Sikora. Very nice model and available as a kit.

Another model with a fibreglass fuselage and veneered foam wing was the First flown by Guy Brand. This model was built from a kit produced by BLEJZYK in Poland. Like Peter Sikora's design it is remarkably light, and has good penetration. Guy had the misfortune, in the first two rounds, to be called on to fly when the following wind was at its strongest, and he made low scores from which he could not recover. However, the First shows lots of potential.



A popular location at any contest, is always the Club House, and the bar-b-que. The Millennium Cup series always tries to ensure that there is a bar b que lunch available, and host Clubs help in this task.

There is plenty of scope for luck to affect the outcome in the Millennium Cup competition format. In my opinion, though you want to minimise the effect of luck, in a World Championship, having luck play a part in a low key two metre event is a good thing. Sometimes it helps you and sometimes it doesn't. In the long run it probably evens itself out.

The final results were:

1st	Mike Greenfield	1872
2nd	John Kinlay	1867
3rd	Rick Harris	1858

As you can see, as the Duke of Wellington said after the Battle of Waterloo, it was a close run thing.