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## 2006 FAI Grand Prix

St. Auban, France, September 2 - 9, 2006



## Friday, September 1 - Arrival

## John Good Reporting

Doug Jacobs and I rolled into the CNVV (National Soaring Center) around 8:30 yesterday evening, after a rather less than smooth trip from the US. In the matter of transporting us to Marseilles, it would be fair to say that Air France didn't cover themselves with glory.

Both our flights were late in departing the US. Doug narrowly made his connection in Paris; his checked baggage didn't. I arrived at Charles de Gaulle Airport some two hours late and thus missed my connection. I managed to get a seat on the next flight but one, which itself departed 35 minutes late.

Doug's suitcase was the real latecomer, arriving some seven hours after Doug did (why it couldn't have been put on my flight was never fully explained). We thought it best to wait around for it rather than hope it might at some point be shipped to him at St. Auban. This gave us the chance to explore some of Marseilles. There is a huge sailboat basin in an old part of town, and seemingly enough restaurants and cafes nearby to cater to captain and full crew for every one of them. We congratulated ourselves on driving directly there with no wrong turns, finding a parking space just when and where we needed one, and avoiding several significant traffic backups.



the confluence of the Durance and the Bléone rivers. Having been here before it was easy to find the airfield (and strongly against

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No team funds  
are used for  
Grand Prix  
events



standard practice, there actually are road signs here sufficient to allow a newcomer to find the airfield).

The CNVV has pretty much what a soaring pilot dreams of in the way of facilities: a huge grass airfield (something like 4000' x 1500') with a number of paved strips, six or eight large hangars, a fleet of gliders to make your jaw drop, towplanes sufficient to launch this fleet, workshops, a dining hall, an admin building, an accommodations building, a campground, a swimming pool, tennis courts, and probably a bunch of stuff I've overlooked.

The rooms we are staying in overlook the airfield. They are not deluxe, but have beds, a desk and a private bathroom. Add some cheap carpeting, a TV set and two plastic cups wrapped in plastic and you'd have something many US motels would be proud of.

A uniquely French breakfast is included with your room here: you get a baguette of French bread, butter, jam or honey, and a large bowl of coffee (au lait or noir). This coffee container is not some modified or oversized cup or mug – it's a downright bowl, and a large one at that. Refills are available, though seldom requested.

Fortified with this meal, we devoted the morning to getting Doug's glider contest-ready. He has been assigned one of several Discus 2s that CNVV owns – this one is a B model (I'm not sure he'd be comfortable in the narrow cockpit of the A model). Gliders for this contest must meet the rules of the 15-Meter class. I'm sure Doug would prefer to have flaps; the CNVV naturally owns several state-of-the-art flapped gliders including Ventus 2s and ASW-27s, but these were snapped up some time ago. Doug's contest ID is EH, which he noted might have been slightly more suitable for a Canadian pilot. But since he lives closer to Canada than any other contestant, he get Echo Hotel, eh?



We installed a Cambridge GPS-NAV for guidance and as a backup flight logger. We also installed a heavy tailwheel, which will tend to put the CG near where it should be. We put on some 80 liters of waterballast, and found no leaks at all (the CNVV tends to keep its equipment in good condition). The glider was deemed airworthy by 10am.

Today's weather in the southern Alps was beautiful for most purposes, though perhaps not ideal for long-distance soaring. A high-pressure system sits just north of us, and the sky was severely blue. Of course (as is typically the case in the mountains) lots of sun will heat lots of rocky faces which then produce thermals. But the

morning forecast suggested that these would reach perhaps 7000' – not generous in terrain that can itself rise to 9000'. Pilots were also told to expect decidedly inferior lift if they ever fell below the local peaks, which was said to be a likely fate in several areas.

In the face of this less than glowing forecast, Doug found the conditions actually rather good. He took care not to get low and was mostly able to stay in touch with good lift that in the best part of the day reached 8000'. There were actually a few cumulus clouds among the high peaks far to the north, though in the area where most pilots flew it was indeed severely blue. The warning about difficulties at low altitudes apparently was accurate – I heard some tales of much time wasted.

Outside of a few small problems (e.g. one of two 12-volt batteries can manage just 3.8v after 4 hours of charging) glider EH seems to be working well. Tomorrow is an "Official" practice day, which means that a task will be set and scores will be determined. Also scheduled is "scrutineering" – the process by which all gliders are weighed, measured and determined to conform to the rules. - John Good

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