

F5J World Championships 2025



In August 2024 the Soaring Special Interest Group held a trial in Hawkes Bay to select the 2025 F5J New Zealand team. There were five interested trialists amongst the competitors, and the result was that Joe Wurts, Peter McEvoy and Kevin Botherway were selected for the NZ team to defend our team gold medals over the prior two F5J World Championships.

We held three practice weekends in Matamata to enable the team to practice together and discuss strategies and best possible solutions. A huge thanks to Bill Derenzy who organized for us to use the “goat farm” field and to those locals who turned up to provide planes in the air so we could get used to flying in a busy sky. All three of the team practiced at home fields before leaving for the event.

The team appointed David Pratley from Australia as team manager. He has helped the NZ team at many world champs in the past and deserved this appointment. All the relevant paperwork, team shirts, model labels, NZL flags, National Anthem, tools, repair kits were all packed into 4 large corflute model boxes along with 14 odd models and spares. We had 5 people in total heading to Argentina including Peter's Wife - Caroline attending as helper and supporter.

Flights for the Kiwis was a little harder than previous trips to Argentina as Air NZ doesn't go there anymore so it meant a transfer in Santiago, Chile on the way to and from Argentina. With the big aircraft crates as usual the airports were like zoos and had huge queues for customs etc but all in all the transfers went smoothly. Fortunately, the Argentine officials had advised customs that there would be heaps of models coming into the country which were all pre documented etc.

Our first day of practice was at the Salvador Ranch (A bit west of the WC field) with many thanks to Rodrigo Salvador for allowing a few early arriving teams to use this venue to start sorting models and getting used to local conditions.

The World Championship field was approximately 30 minutes away from our accommodation which was in the centre of Cordoba, Argentina. The field was part of an airbase and runway area for the air force. It was nice in that there were no restricted flight areas. There was only one main thermal trigger being a building we called "the circus" right next to the launch lanes, although the mowed grass airstrip did provide good thermal generation.

The main event was a weeklong, preceded by the open event Tango Cup two-day competition. This event allows all competitors, helpers and locals to enter and have some practice flying in the planned competition world championships format. We completed 6 rounds with 92 competitors entered in the preliminary rounds and Joe placed 6th in the preliminary rounds, allowing him to fly the 3 rounds of fly-offs to select the winners of the competition. Joe flew exceedingly well and won this event overall, his third Tango Cup Trophy after visiting Argentina two times prior to the F5J world championships. The Cup event provided us with a bit of practice for conditions to come for World championships.

We had a day's break to register models, along with some more practice. The team was allowed to check in 3 models each in total of which they could interchange parts between planes. After a bit of discussion, Dave Pratley offered up two of his models to Pete so that Pete could also fly Plus X during the competition. This was a very gracious and kind offer. The weather forecast suggested variable conditions from light and fluffy to a few days of strong winds. The mission was to cover all aspects with the three models allowed per pilot.

A technical meeting was then held and an opening ceremony which was as usual well organized by the Argentinian officials. We had long days throughout the event, starting with a 5.15 am alarm, 6:15 breakfast, arriving at the field by 7:30 AM and staying at the field until around 6.30pm. After packing up our models we would arrive at the lodging around 7.30pm. The temperature was unusually hot, with one day topping 41C, and most of the contest days in the upper 30s. It was nice that the awards ceremony and banquet was a bit cooler, around 25C maximum.



Ground Owl seen everywhere

The Circus with Joe at the Tango cup

Monday morning was the start of a long week of endurance, the preliminary rounds, in which there were a total of 15 rounds with up to 14 in a group. We each averaged three to four flights each per day, with five heats per round for the seniors, and two heats per round for the juniors. The air was very unstable at times. In the mornings it was light and fluffy, and topping out not as high as we are used to. Many were caught out with thermals dissipating during the 10-minute flight and many not making the full 10-minute slot. Landings were pretty controlled. A few competitors had their first zero in the first round! Team NZ was in tidy shape with consistent scores for day 1.

The second day we had fog and had to wait until it cleared as models disappeared at about 100m into the sky. Once we started flying it was a nice light wind day building up to a breeze in the afternoon. Joe managed to bag a couple of 1000's and again the kiwis were consistent. Many teams and pilots already had some serious damage on the scoreboard. The day ended quite early as we had a fantastic weather spectacle with a nearby supercell thunderstorm providing a lightning show and a cloud formation that looked like a large hurricane forming in the sky.



The third day had strong wind predicted in the afternoon. We started off in calmer conditions in the first round. Unfortunately, Joe and Kev got their first zeros with Kev landing out and Joe losing control of his model on launch, crashing into a large brush area away from the field. Peter was flying very conservatively and was putting some scores in for team Kiwi. There were usually up to two or three usable thermals on the field, and many had lots of planes in them to avoid mid-air's. If a mid-air happened (there were about 10 in all) you had an option to refly in the next group so long as you called it out and landed immediately. The wind really came on in the afternoon and was strong. It was launched as far upwind as you could see and, in most flights, stayed upwind in a good corridor; very few were successful taking thermals and getting back from anywhere downwind, as an example one pilot went down wind in good lift and still ended up landing more than 1km down wind. We were certainly carrying some ballast with heavy brass rods in the wings and some lead in the fuse so we could drive our models. Again, there was some carnage on the scoreboard and few planes receiving damage just when trying to land.

The day four -Thursday again wind predicted for the afternoon which wasn't quite as strong as the day before and thermals were able to be taken downwind but height was essential to get home. By the end of the day the team could see a third place or bronze on the horizon if we got lucky. Most of the week the thermals were unstable, and you didn't climb very high but today they were strong enough to get some good return height if you were in the right place, although you needed stepping stones of lift to get home.

The final day consisted of the last flight of the preliminary rounds in the morning again there was still a glimmer of hope that team Kiwi could get to the podium but sadly not to be and we remained in 5th place for the team overall Joe had come out overall in 4th place and moved through to the fly-offs with still only two models (one still in the heavy brush).

The schedule was to have two rounds of flyoffs on the Friday and two on the Saturday, but the organizers wisely wanted to push on as the forecast for the following day wasn't great. So, we started the four-round final with a break in the middle of juniors. The final was a 15-minute round of torture and Joe came out on fire and in round one bagged a 1000 followed by a close 997 points. Everyone was being very aggressive on launch and many (half the pack) out of the 14 finalists failed in this one with some huge landouts. We had a little break and then a rinse and repeat for round three with the wind picking up. Joe went a little more conservative but was still by far the lowest launch of the group. Joe landed a bit early in round 3 after having to leave a very good thermal due to vision issues and could not find anything but sink on the way upwind. The final round had the wind pick up considerably, with many landings downwind due to the challenging conditions. Kev really had his work cut out for him when calling Joe due to simultaneously attempting to find air as well as being a backup pair of eyes due to Joe's poor eyesight. Only three made the full time and Joe was one of them which clinched his individual World Champion title for 2025 with a margin of about four minutes of flight time compared to the second-place finisher.



While Kev and Joe were dealing with flyoffs, Peter went with the local army in a Unimog to find Joe's model and arrived back about an hour later with most of it intact and repairable excluding the fuselage. On the next day, we had prize giving, closing ceremonies, and then an unbelievable banquet. Once again, a well-organized event with some fantastic food. This was an awesome time to catch up with all our regular friends and make some new acquaintances.

Overall, the NZ team performed to the best we could under the conditions and left the field very happy with our overall performance. We all played well together and Dave our team manager did a fantastic job and beyond the call of duty. A little team but a great team!

Results are found here:

https://f5jargentina.com/official_results
<http://gliderscore.com/OnLineScores.aspx>



A super thank you to Model Flying New Zealand, NZ Soaring and Rex Ashwell who helped support the team with funds that assisted the large costs of entering the event with entries (\$400.00 euro each) rental cars, accommodation, lunches - the list goes on!

Kev, Dave, and Joe stopped over in Chile, Santiago for a couple of days to see the sights and city. Valparaiso was a very interesting visit. Joe was very fortunate and spent his last afternoon soaring in the Andes, many thanks to Andres Cordova. Next 2027 World Championship F5J has been announced in Muncie Indiana USA.

Thank you to the Argentina officials, timekeepers and all involved in a well organised world championship - fantastic effort!

The A Team - Peter, Joe, Kev, Dave and Caroline - ***Soaring Rocks!***