



## Presseausendung

Mondsee Dezember 2009

### Speeflying Extreme

Snowkiting.at Press Department

#### Hardy Brandstötter – Speedflying Extreme

Somewhere between the mountains and plateaus of the Alps in a secret spot, normally requiring a long walk and a lot of hiking upwards, it's the starting point for Speedflying. Hardy Brandstötter, is one of Austria's riders and who has played an active role in the sports development and has also taught the sport for many years until a recent hiatus whilst wing development continues so the latest safety tweaks can be implemented...(well thats the official story).

The Sport is probably one of the most dangerous aerial sports in existence for two reasons, Speed and very low level flying in mountains. The rider normally rides at speeds of up to 80 km/h in Turns over 100 km/h very fast downwards, performing wing overs (rolls), touch and go (the rider touched the slopes with his skis,) and various other acrobatic maneuvers trying to find the Adrenaline rush.

Professional snowsports athlete Hardy Brandstötter is one of the best there is, but even he can find his limits. When i first meet Hardy it was a memorable experience, we were snowkiting in Italy, shooting some shots for a magazine and I asked him if he was crazy? His answer, "I like my life..." that explained it all to me, he was a serious sports professional, originally starting in snow kiting, where a rider pulls himself along on a snow surface with a kite on ski's or a snowboard, Speedflying was a natural progression for him. The speed glider wing is designed to fly fast, turn fast and pack small, it can be used on the ground and in the air. The design allows the rider to control his height and speed allowing him to touch the ground on his descent, carve large turns and generally freeride in a way that other sports do not allow.

The danger elements come from the fact of limited time if something does go wrong as normally Hardy is not that high (less than 30 metres) and mountain conditions, rocks and rider error. In the last year a lot of people were reported with serious injury's and or death, from a pool of only 80-100 riders, that is a high percentage.

Hardy is a professional often hiking up mountains or in large expanses looking for mountains which can give him a good line, he has had to turn back on many occasions, as the conditions were not



right. Normally a rider can start to learn the process on a piste making short touch and go landings and riding on the surface learning to control the wing. Progression is then up to top the levels of the mountains which Hardy says are the best where you take in 3000 metre descents that last up to 15 mins of hardcore adrenaline fueled rides, that leave you so tired as the concentration levels are incredibly high as the rider has to negotiate rocks and slopes on his high speed ride downwards.

This sport from a distance could be mistaken as paragliding, although similar it is not, the wings descend at about twice the rate compared to a paraglider, and are smaller and although the modern design is stable, they do not perform like a paraglider. Micheal Nesler ~~and~~ an expert paraglider and wing designer has worked hard on developing the safest and most stable highest performing wings possible and won awards for the innovation from the ISPO brandnew Awards in Germany in 2005. Hardy working along side Micheal gaining from his experience and feeding back on the wing development, has avoided any injuries that other riders have had the misfortune to have, and has worked with Redbull as a stunt man for past Redbull events. The sport though is more a sport about individuality rather than mass participation, watching it is amazing, doing it is for the single minded. Firstly you need space, and often that means hiking upwards for hours to places where there is no one else, increasing the risk as rescue is further away should things go wrong. Some of the high plateaus in the alps offer some of the best opportunities, but you have to hike to get to the best starting positions for the fast ride down. According to Hardy that is one of the attractions of the sport, he is able to be alone and be in the environment before ripping through it at high speed in near silence only metres above rocks and snow on vertical faces to gentle slopes. The variation the sport offers and the thrill is so varied that the respect, patience and skilled needed for all the elements involved to get to the very highest level in the sport is only for the few, Hardy is one of the best of the few.

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