

## 2007 Oct 22 - And the Brazilian Record falls again...414kms by Marcelo 'Ceceu' Prieto

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Report by Marcelo "Cec eu" Prieto - 414km on a Sol Tracer 11 - New Brazilian Open Distance Paragliding Record.

We arrived at the ramp around at 7:00 a.m. and checked if the wind was perfect to take off. And we decided to take off as early as possible to avoid dangerous take-off later when thermal activity adds up to the wind.

The day started blue with a promise of perfect conditions to break the record. However, during the initial moments of flight, the scenery started radically to change with some thick stratus clouds just above the first cumulus of the day and giving shades to the route. It was discouraging and almost ruined the day that would be the day of the first flight above 400km in Brazil.

So we decided to keep above the take-off and wait to make the first try in order to avoid landing just after taking off. And that would be disastrous. We waited until 8:10 am to guarantee the most comfortable take-off. Maybe this decision has saved our day.

In the first 20 km we went down sometimes with great possibilities to land very soon. However, the day didn't disappoint us and we manage until km 50. After a very difficult and complicated beginning, we thought that we would not fall anymore. All of this confidence betrayed us when we took the first wrong decision of the day when we almost got to the ground just before Madalena (km 60), just under some cumulus that seemed to show some activity but at same time was going away.

Rafa and I did well in the beginning and saving the flight sometimes. Unfortunately the team work finished right there when Rafael landed at 10:15 a.m. At that time the sky showed a well done alignment until Monsenhor Tabosa (km 120). I managed to follow this line until the end at the base of Tabosa Mountains.

When I arrived in Serra de Tabosa (Tabosa Chain), I couldn't understand why the wind had turned to the south-west, and throwing me to the left of the mountains, place that I believe it is not much safe, specially with strong wind.

I was at 200 m from the ground on the left of Tabosa plateau. I could not imagine where I was getting into. In few minutes I realized that the place was not safe at all to fly. A sequence of collapses and very strong forwarding made me wish just to find a safe place to land.

During 15 minutes I thought of throwing the reserve and save me from that terrible and totally without control situation. But I managed until the Tamboril plain. After all the terror I felt in Serra de Tabosa, I had the impression that from that moment everything would be better and flight would be safer.

The ceiling went to 3.000m at 11:30 a.m. and that allowed me to increase the speed average until Serra de Poranga (Poranga Chain) (km 200). In Ipaporanga, just before the mountains, I came across with the strongest thermal of my life with 13 m/s pinks and averages of 10,5m/s.

I jumped to Poranga plateau on the city's left in a comfortable high. I thought if the flight was really good, the record would be guaranteed.

The only problem was that the wind was not aligned with the traditional route (Pedro II), throwing me to the south, an unknown region for me and apparently with not many landing options and almost no roads. My second moment of terror was coming. A sea of jurema (dense vegetation composed of semi-dry branches) was just under me. I made a mistake and I fell onto a strong descendent that almost got me down just at 100 m from the ground. The last option to land was just in front of me and I was in a very weak wind cycle (0,5m/s) trying to climb for the last time before I decide to land.

When I was close to the last clearing I try to fly against the wind to land on it. It wasn't a good idea because I started to fly backwards and I realized that if I continue I would end up in the jurema anyway. The wind cycle was my only way out. Even if I land there would be only one option: sleep in the woods until the rescue come for me with the help of local people to find me. Feeling sick and very down I barely could inform my position to the rescue.

I decided that nothing in the world would let me out of that wind cycle and it took me long 15 minutes to reach 700m from the ground and then I could breath again. The wind cycle vanished and my option was to continue until I find a safe landing. I saw some houses on my left and I hoped to be high enough to get close to them. Then my luck started to change. I went in that direction and finally met a bit stronger wind cycle that hold me until a group of vultures in a good thermal and I got out of that hole. My only wish at that moment was to get into the cloud's nuclei (3.200m) and run away from that situation, but I didn't even get close to this. I reached only 1.800m from the ground and the cycle dissipated.

At that high I could already think about the record again. I saw a well formed cloud about 8 km from me and I didn't

hesitate to go into that direction. Dioclécio (the rescue) told me that my average was great. Feeling motivated I faced some rocks very down thinking that they would save my flight. If that was not going to happen, at least there was a house and a safe option to land and that made me be calm.

But soon I went down again with that sea of jurema and that lonely house as my back-up. I was almost getting close to land when I got into a thermal and gained enough high to climb to the next cloud. I asked Dió at that moment the name of that city and he said city of Campo Maior (350 km). when I went to that direction, finally I smelt the humidity, a gift after all the tension moments next to the ground.

The possibility of breaking the South-American record was huge because it was 4 p.m. and I was already in the km 360.

Then my luck changed again, because at the end of the line of clouds there was a big blue hole with a big and thick cirrus shading and finishing prematurely the condition (4:30 p.m.) I went to the final glide into the direction of the city of Jose de Freitas (390 km), holding me up in weak windy cycles to guarantee at least the 400km.

Checking in the GPS, I found a point - P01 that I thought would be the ramp coordinate. I usually call the ramp as P01 in all places where I fly, but at this time (I don't know why) the P01 in my GPS was the coordinate when I had to land some days ago. I flew my last kilometers strongly based on that coordinate thinking that I was close to pass through the 400km barrier, when actually I had already passed the 400km and was already doing a glide for 415km. I only found that on the next day.

In the final glide there was not much options since there was some palm trees and cashew trees that would not allow me a safe landing. After going through all that tension moments and psychological stress during the flight, certainly it was a wise decision not to extend glide just to win another kilometer in the record.

The point is that the cirrus didn't allow me to return to the cloud's nuclei after that wonderful line that I have made, so I did everything to maximize my final glide and I had no changes to climb again and extend more my flight.

I let Dió know that my mark was 399km, I couldn't imagine that I have made the longest flight of my life. The difficult moments that I went through were not worthless.

At least my dream came true after years of dedication and seasons in the "sertão" (the most arid region in the Brazilian Northeast). For the first time in history a pilot pass through the 400km barrier taking off from a natural ramp and this flight been made a Brazilian, with Brazilian equipment and in Brazil. Without any doubt a very special day.

It was 10 hours and 20 minutes to make 415km, taking off in Quixadá (State of Ceará) and landing in José de Freitas (State of Piauí).

SOL deserve it after years investing in the sport, searching for the 400km mark in Brazil, almost accomplished last week by my partner and pupil Rafael Saladini, who flew alone and didn't make it for just 2,3 km, and this shows us the evolution in the development of equipment.

I would like to thank specially the designer André Rottet (SOL), that with a enormous competency developed this very special canopy Tracer 11, which allowed me to face all the extreme situations during this flight, performing itself in an excellent form for a canopy in this category.

I thank Ary and Fernando Pradi, that always supported me, and they believed my dreams.

Thanks Dioclécio for the constant support as a "co-pilot", always stimulating me and giving me confidence during the most difficult moments. His job during the XC Northeast Expedition is very important for the pilots' safety.

I thank my partner André Fleury for many years accompanied me and taught me a lot about this place. I thank Rafael Saladini for his partnership during the XC Northeast Expedition and for helping me a lot during the beginning of this flight and many others.

We follow our dreams, flying...

Big hug for everyone,

Marcelo Prieto, Cecéu.

Best Regards!!

Photo Gallery

[www.solsports.com.br](http://www.solsports.com.br)

For more info on their month long expedition look to Leonardo