



The kids are united

Angela Jones, 15, gives a teen's eye view of the European Championships which were held in East Germany in August

It all started in 2005. Chloe and I were both at the Honda Grand Prix in Luxembourg with our respective parents, Stephen and Louise Jones (Marcus Green's crew) and Chloe's mum, Lindsay Muir. We were taken along by our parents, as they do, but had no real role. Mike Howard had his normal crew, his wife Renee and daughter Cydnee, then only 2. He asked if we would like to help him out and look after Cydnee while on retrieve.

Having had many years of balloon crewing experience between us, we soon got to grips with the balloon, the fan, the map reading and the packing away. We had a great time.

In Luxembourg 2006, again we crewed for Mike and again we had a great time. We were starting to work together as a good team.

Late in 2006, Mike got his place at the Europeans, to be held in Magdeburg, Germany, and he asked us to crew for him if we were going to be there. We jumped at the chance as we were going anyway and a bit of healthy family rivalry can't be bad!

There was a condition: we had to crew for him at the 2007 Nationals so we could sort out our roles and become familiar with where in the team we were going to fit - but there were no Nationals. So off we went to Magdeburg with no practice!

But where to sleep? We were a different crew with a different pilot, so we persuaded our parents we should have a different room; and we took in a lodger from a different team - Stephanie who was crewing for her dad, a young inexperienced pilot called David Bareford! So we were made! We had accommodation, we had a pilot and we now just needed to WIN.

I got there early and had a practice flight with Neil Gabriel. We dipped our toes in the water and then collided with the river bank (he was too busy taking pictures). He was going to blame me for the collision!

Mike then arrived but we still had no retrieve driver, as Renee was due to arrive later in the week (must get the age

limit on driving lowered). We had another practice flight and I did a double retrieve with the Gabriels, looking after Cydnee.

Mike had agreed to work with Philippe de Cock and Jan Timmers, the Belgian pilots, and so for the week Mike became an honorary Belgian. We got to know them quite well but they weren't

The first flight tasks were set. They were a Fly-In to the main spectator field followed by a Hesitation Waltz. We jumped in the car and Renee drove to the west of the city. We got Mike into the air and he won the Fly-In task. What a good start! Being in the middle of a city was really good as it meant that we went shopping instead of sleeping some afternoons.

The Monday morning flight, the sixth, Mike got back on form and won another task, which we were really pleased about.

There was still time for some lighter activities. Chloe had a PuT flight one evening after the competition flight was over. Mike and Renee also took all of the British kids, seven in all, swimming to the local water park which was great fun. We even managed to blag our way into getting ice cream bought for us by Frank Noack, one of the German pilots. As Mike did not have a big enough vehicle we used the Bareford bus.

The hotel was really nice, even if our room was a bit of a mess. Breakfast each morning was a full cooked affair plus anything else you can imagine. If we managed to get the flight over and Mike back to the hotel by 10:30am we could feast. It was tight sometimes but we managed it every day.

Our meals each night ended up being in either the Italian, Palazzo, the sports bar called the American Bar or a young, hip restaurant called Alex. These were all good restaurants. The Palazzo had the best ice creams, which ended up being lunch most days.

Mike came in sixth, the best-placed British pilot. This meant that the two of us, with Renee and Cydnee's help, had been a better crew than all the old timers! Thanks to all the British team, too many to mention, we had an amazing time.

Mike is now off to Dubai and we need a good pilot to keep our hand in until Stephanie gets her licence and thrashes you all - any offers?



Girlpower: Stephanie, Angela and Chloe with young Cydnee Howard

as good as us! Having a young crew helps!

Competition flights started on the Friday evening and we flew every slot until Tuesday morning when the weather became bad and we didn't fly again. The alarm was going off at 4:10 am with briefing at 5am, but we three girls only overslept once!