



**TODAY WILL BE SUNSHINE**  
**A day at Coppa Internazionale del Mediterraneo**

**by Ib Wienberg**

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Rewritten from I DAG BLIVER SOLSKIN, FLYV, May 1996 I am looking at the town square, Piazza Cesare Battisti, and giving the standard morning remark - today will be sunshine. Kirsten and I are in Rieti for the CIM as so many times before. Our good friends Conny and Erik Dossing with nine-year old Stine are also here and we meet downstairs for breakfast. A little after nine o'clock we start for the airfield. The morning traffic in the centre of Rieti is intense, but with an Italian touch to our driving, we cover the short distance to the northern end of town in a few minutes, and are entering the C-gate, We have better slow down to the Danish countryside way of driving when we are back home next week. There is much activity in the parking area. the many gliders are being made ready for a new day, filled with huge quantities of water and polished a little - and some good stories from yesterday's task are told. The heat is still moderate and everyone enjoys being in the open. 501 KM QUADRILATERAL When our two Ventus are ready, they are pulled to the grid. Half-way there, the tasks are announced over the public address system. Yesterday was rather easy - a 335 km triangle in fine weather. I did 132 km/h and a good placing, but everyone did fast times and was back early in the afternoon. In Rieti a short task is often followed by a long one next day and today the 15-metres have been set for starting first, up in front of the grid. Tema di gara, quindici metri - The voice of Pugnetti is clearly recognizable and we make a stop and look for pen and paper. It is very little what we understand in Italian, and yet is enough to get the task: Rieti Hospital (94), Campo di Giove (42), Costacciaro (24), Arezzo (78), Rieti finish line - in all 501 km. While the English translation is given, we put the Ventus on the start line. Indications of a good day are already seen in the wisps of moisture leaving the local 7,260 feet Terminillo to the east and the Sabini range west of the airfield. Maybe I had expected a little longer task. When the weather is good in Rieti, the flying is very fast - a 500 km triangle at 165 km/h as some of the best - but often the start of thermal activity is rather late, awaiting the high temperatures reached around noon, and more than 500 km are not given often. The tasks are set by a group with Piero Pugnetti, Smilian Cibic, the met and a very experienced competition pilot in recent years, Hans Nietlispach from Switzerland. They know the

weather and the possibilities of Rieti better than any - so a 501 quadrilateral is the right task for today. Briefing at 10.30. The air is rather dry at medium levels, we are told, and early in the day only a few and short-lived cumulus are expected. More built-up cu's will develop later and in the highest mountains, but no risk of thunderstorms. The sea breeze from the Adriatic will possibly move into the Popoli area. Thermals should start at 32° Celsius, expected at 12.30 - when the 15 meters are also set for take-off. UNDER THE TREE After briefing, Conny, Stine and Kirsten go to town to do some shopping and Erik and I hide under the sunshade and look at the task. When the girls are back - very satisfied with what they have found in a shoe shop, I think - we put turning points, maps, etc. plus drinking water and some chairs in the cars and go to the tree next to the grid. On most days the same people come here - Haggemueller from Austria, Hans Binder from Switzerland and Attilio Pronzati among them. As many years ago as in 1961 Philip Wills won an open Italian Championship in Rieti and by the way Pronzati was second. Now some of the very best, especially from Germany, Switzerland and Austria - Austria with 19 pilots this time . - fly the Coppa every year with Stefano Ghiorzo, Giorgio Galetto, Thomas Gostner, Leonardo and Riccardo Briigliadori, Alvaro de Orleans - from Spain but living in Italy and flying from Rieti - and the many other good pilots who are here. This year a handful of Ventus 2s from Germany, Austria and northern Italy dominate the 15 metre class, and Erik and I have much trouble with the mountain experts, but the chase is a lot of fun. TOW BY A CAMOUFLAGED CESSNA L-19 Take-off is on time and soon I am bumping along runway 2 behind a camouflaged Cessna L-19. The tow is going west to the Sabini range, right on top of the charming town of Greccio and Il Nido del Corvo, where we spent yesterday evening enjoying the look of the Rieti valley, the splendid six-course dinner and the flow of good wine from the owner's vineyard. At the 4,000 feet top the L-19 gives me the signal to leave. I take out the engine and let it run for a moment, so there is proof that the engine detection system is working. First thermal near the drop zone is a crowded affair, by at 6,800 it tops and the many gliders split up. Erik has taken-off a little earlier and is near Terni, where he has found wave and is in company with most of the Ventus 2s. I tell him that I may go to Terminillo. All the 15 meter gliders are in the air now, but we still have time to look for the best location for the start. On my way to Terminillo, right above Rieti and in the blue, I found lift and start a slow climb. Erik tells of 10,500 ft at Terminillo and I can't get that much in the weak wave, but Terni is far away now and I inform him that I will remain in the area near the starting point. Pugnetti has called the later starters and asked their whereabouts and altitude. This is well qualified competition management. The starting is not opened until it is verified that all competitors are in a position to make a decent start. Today no-one has problems and at 13.20 the task is open. Even considering 500 km from early in the afternoon could be enough, only a few start out right away, but I tell Erik that I will go, if I am losing altitude in the weak wave and at 13.38 I take a picture of Rieti Hospital. NURIA, MORRONE AND VELINO The usual route to the south east is via 6,200 feet Nuria, sometimes with a thermal, but not today - along the mountains east of Lago

di Salto, where good thermals are often found but none is found today - to 7,020 feet Morrone and almost a guarantee of very good thermals at the tunnel tubes of the A 24 highway, but with nothing today. Some other early starts fly close to the rocks of Morrone - much too close to my liking - and find a little, while I slip along the foot of the 8,160 feet Velino. That mountain looks very large from here. Then I see a small cumulus forming high above the soft rolling hills in front of Velino and shortly after I am in a lovely 4-5 m/s. Erik is now on his way also and I inform him of the good thermal. Five minutes later I see fairly many gliders low down in the weak lift close to Velino and I can hardly suppress a smile when I level out at 10,600 ft, all by myself. North of Celano I make a detour along the Sirente and climb to cloud base without circling. On the lower mountains west of Sulmona another good thermal and then Campo di Giove lies right there in the blue - at the foot of the huge 9,170 ft Maiella. THE NON-EXISTENT LOCATION On my way to the turning point I pass the location where Erik landed in 1982. The field was excellent, almost like a lawn, but even before he had come to a halt, Erik was surrounded by a uniformed crowd waving real automatic guns and shouting : "explosive, explosive". He had put his glider right on top of some big cylinders hidden in the ground or something else heavily armed and very secret. Hours later his identity was confirmed from Copenhagen and the uniforms were a little more relaxed, but it was not until the glider was out of the area - on a green truck - that peace was fully restored and he could phone for a retrieve. The area was non-existent and he could not ask his crew to come to a place that was not there. Now, many years later I still have fun in finding the non-existent location. SEA BREEZE AND GRAN SASSO North of Campo di Giove I fly along the 6,760 ft Mucchia. No clouds, but the sun is at a right angle to the rock and there is rough but rather good lift most of the way. The I spot the sea breeze. In the Sulmona valley the air is dry and clear - to the east it is much more hazy. The air from the Adriatic is coming in. By following the haze line I can make a glide at high speed, passing Popoli and up in the area of the Gran Sasso - named after my dog. Gran Sasso with Monte Corno going up to 9,560 feet is the highest of the Apennines. Large herds of horses are grazing on the green slopes during the summer and a little snow can still be found in the shade high up. What is more important right now - above the almost vertical south wall is a line of the best-looking cumulus and climbing is the top of the clouds. I am happy with the 10,400 feet cloud base - it is high country from here. Lago di Campotosto, 8,060 feet Gorzano and on to the 8,130 Vettore; the going is good. But I am flying rather conservatively in this difficult area. On the way north west I am caught up by the Ventus 2s and their experienced mountain pilots. Erik has also caught up with me and tells that most pilots started 10 or 15 minutes later than I. It looks like the party is over. From Costacciaro it is something like 70 km due West to Arezzo. No cumulus here but rather good blue thermals and decent altitudes. We are passing Gubbio, Erik now a few Km ahead - and the hills at Città di Castello. Just when I am close to losing contact with Erik and the Ventus 2s in front, I have the luck of falling into a very good thermal and get around 78 - the 3rd turning point, the hangars of Arezzo

airfield - as one of the first. SOMETHING FOR THE DANES Arezzo is still high up in the north, but the wind is blowing from behind now and the day is still on - the remaining 140 km should not give serious problems. At the briefing, some of our Italian friends joked that the last leg in flat country was something given to please the Danes, and a row of cumulus from Arezzo in the direction of Lago di Trasimeno and to the south of the lake again is also making a lot of fun. Today the ordinary route via Maggiore and Val Nerina can't be better than the straight line. I inform Erik, who was low at Arezzo but now is going again, of the cumulus. At Todi it is time to think about the final glide. Todi is a lovely town situated on a hill in the middle of farming country. In 1987 I spent more than an hour in the slope lift of the hill and had plenty of time to look at the town while waiting for the last thermal. The Garmin indicates 54 km and I have 4,800 feet - not quite enough for coming in with speed, but the cumulus are still working, so I press on. Passing Acquasparta at 4,200 feet a little later, Rieti is in the bag. At the hills to the north of Terni I speed up and give Kirsten a call on the VHF. Due to the mountains we are out of reach all day and I know any message is welcome. The first within radio distance always gives a full report of positions and can tell that Erik is climbing at Todi. I now fly rather low over the Marmore. The beautiful 160 meter fall is in fact artificial - Roman made 2,200 years ago by digging a canal for the Velino river through the mountains. The whole of central Italy is filled with history. INDIA BRAVO IN ARRIVO At 18.17 I cross the finish line low and fast. On downwind there is plenty of time for landing instructions and the lookout for other gliders finishing. Most of the standard class have arrived, but only a few from the 15 metre class. I am clocked 4 hours and 30 minutes, and a 5th with 107.9 km/h. On my way back into the parking area I see Erik coming in to a 6th place. Jolly good day for the lowlanders. THE CHOICE OF STINE In the glider parking we take the documentation out and bring it to the offices, clean up the gliders and put them in the trailers. This evening Stine is allowed to select the menu and decides on "pollo e fritte" from the grill in the new shopping center plus some very large Coca Colas. We all agree except on the Cola. Rather late we drive back into central Rieti and up the narrow cobblestone streets to Quattro Stagioni. The hotel has a large balcony in front and every evening the square below is crowded with people of Rieti, some very young and some of them older, but everyone in high spirits. For a long time we stand on the balcony outside our rooms enjoying the very special atmosphere. This is a wonderful place.