



**PRESS RELEASE**  
For immediate release

## **A long race with a nail-biting finish: Swiss team Laurent Sciboz and Nicolas Tièche win the 2019 Gordon Bennett Cup**

Montbéliard, France, 23 September 2019 – **The 63<sup>rd</sup> Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett, the FAI World Long-distance Gas Balloon Championship, saw the victory of team SUI-1 (Laurent Sciboz/Nicolas Tièche) on Tuesday 17 September. The two pilots landed their gas balloon in Romania, 1774.76km from the take-off site in Montbéliard, France. They spent a total of 82h03m in the air.**

SUI-2 (Kurt Frieden/Pascal Witpraechtger) – came second, while FRA-1 (Vincent Leys/Christophe Houver) and GER-2 (Matthias Zenge/Benjamin Eimers) tied for third place. The prize-giving ceremony took place on Saturday 21 September in Montbéliard.

The 20 competing gas balloon teams lifted off from Montbéliard, France on Friday evening. Several options were possible at the time but most teams chose to fly low towards Central France, expecting a change of winds on Saturday. This strategy paid off for the teams as the winds did indeed start to blow the balloons to Germany, allowing them to push further into Austria, Hungary, and finally Romania and Bulgaria.

On Tuesday at dawn, no fewer than seven balloons were still in the air, which has never happened in this legendary endurance race. SUI-1, who were flying north of all the other balloons, managed to find a piece of land thrusting into the Black Sea, and landed within metres of the shore. Although their position was hard to beat, all the remaining teams tried their best to “win” a few metres to overtake SUI-1 or secure a place on the podium. Finally, after several hours of nail-biting suspense, the last balloons touched down early in the afternoon, without bettering the position of SUI-1.

Competition Director Markus Haggeneý said: “What an epic race it has been! I can only congratulate all the pilots and their support teams for their determination, courage and competitive spirit in this extraordinarily long race. Hats off to them! The teams fought tooth and nail until the very end, which made the race more exciting than ever.

“These pilots, powered only with the help of the winds, managed the exploit of flying for almost four days until the Black Sea. This incredible spirit of sheer adventure is what makes the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett so special.”

The rule is that the winning team organise the race two years after their victory, so the 2021 race will take off from Switzerland.

### **About the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett**

The Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett ([legends.gordonbennett.aero/](https://legends.gordonbennett.aero/)), the FAI World Long Distance Gas Balloon Championship, is the oldest and most prestigious event in aviation and the ultimate challenge for the pilots.

The world’s best gas balloonists compete on a simple principle: each team launches from the same location with the same quantity of gas. The competitors launch to their national anthem at intervals of a few minutes and up to three teams per country can take part.

The team whose balloon lands furthest from the starting point after an average of 3-4 days of uninterrupted flight wins.

The first edition of the balloon competition, launched in 1906, was held in front of 200,000 spectators at the Jardin des Tuileries in Paris.

Today, the Gordon Bennett Cup benefits greatly from technology: a wide audience can access the position, altitude and speed of all participating balloons in near real time, and the navigation teams have access to intricate mapping to plot courses against the meteorological conditions

After the victory of the Polish team in 2018, the race will take-off from their country in 2020.

### **Editor's notes**

Results: <http://bit.ly/results-gb2019>

Pictures: <http://bit.ly/pictures-gb2019>

Competition website: [www.gordonbennettmontbeliard2019.com](http://www.gordonbennettmontbeliard2019.com)

Live-tracking: [live.gordonbennett.aero/](http://live.gordonbennett.aero/)

Competition Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/Course.Gordon.Bennett](http://www.facebook.com/Course.Gordon.Bennett)

Competition Twitter page: [www.twitter.com/gb\\_fai](http://www.twitter.com/gb_fai)

Competition Youtube page: [www.youtube.com/channel/UC4UymJhgIpENjcbRFQ\\_UvTA](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4UymJhgIpENjcbRFQ_UvTA)

General information about the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett: [legends.gordonbennett.aero](http://legends.gordonbennett.aero)

### **About FAI**

FAI, the World Air Sports Federation, is the world governing body for air sports and for certifying world aviation and space records. The FAI was founded in 1905 and is a non-governmental and non-profit-making organisation recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

FAI activities include Aerobatics, Aeromodelling, Airships, Amateur-Built and Experimental Aircraft, Balloons, Drones, Gliding, Hang Gliding, Helicopters, Manpowered Flying, Microlights, Parachuting, Paragliding, Paramotors, Power Flying and all other Aeronautic activities and Space records.

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