

A HITCH IN PRE-FLIGHT CHECKS AND THE WING FLIES SOLO...

During a task of the Paragliding World Cup at the Saint Hilaire takeoff, a German competitor forgot the preflight check that every pilot must do one last time before taking off. He was lucky – the problem became obvious during take off, and the pilot stayed on the ground, whilst his wing took off all alone in the competition. It even continued to fly for about ten minutes, according to witnesses at the scene, before abandoning the task and landing in the trees (see photo sequence next page).

It is a very high profile example and a good reminder: Forgetting to clip in doesn't just happen to others, it happens to the best of

us. Unfortunately, there are cases where the ending isn't such a happy one. So, always remember: Before taking off, cast a last all-important eye over all the buckles. With a pod harness, the risk is even greater because, once the cockpit part is done up, the pilot feels secure, even if the leg straps are still undone. A similar situation can happen with a conventional harness and a front reserve/cockpit

On the latest cocoon harnesses, systems which are supposed to avoid this problem are becoming increasingly common, but they aren't 100% fool-proof...

Photos : Hugues Baud-Grasset



