

2019 America's Challenge Gas Balloon Race

Team Bio

Team number: 1

Crew Nationality: USA / Poland

Balloon Name: *Misia*

Balloon Registration: SP-BMZ

Pilots:

Name	John "Andy" Cayton	Name	Krzysztof Zapart
Hometown	Black Creek, GA (Savannah area)	Hometown	Świdnica Poland, currently living in Bystrzyca Górna
Occupation	Owns Feather Hot Air Balloons	Occupation	
Aircraft ratings/flight hours	Has 3,200 hours in helicopters, 730 hours in hot air balloons, and more than 700 hours in gas balloons; former U.S. Army Special Forces pilot and aviation safety officer	Aircraft ratings/flight hours	Approximately 700 hours in gas balloons, and 550 hours in hot air balloons.
America's Challenge race history	9 (2003, 2004, 2006-9, 2013, 2015, 2017); won in 2006 with Kevin Knapp as his co-pilot and in 2007 with Stuart Enloe as co-pilot. Flew with Barbara Fricke in 2002 as a non-competitor	America's Challenge history	4 (2014-2017), has finished second every time he has competed in the America's Challenge
Gordon Bennett history	8 (2005, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2018, 2019), finished second in 2018 and third in 2012	Gordon Bennett history	6 (2014 - 2019): finished fifth in 2014 and 2015, 9 th in 2016, and 8 th in 2017.
Other notable flights/records	Holds three world and nine national ballooning records, including the world duration record for Class AX-6 hot air balloons (23 hr. 55 min, 51 sec.) and the distance record for AX 8 and AX9 hot air balloons (1,066 mi.); this is also the longest solo hot air balloon flight in history.	Other notable flights/records	His and Cayton's 2017 America's Challenge flight established new Polish distance and duration records and was the second longest competitive gas balloon flight in history. He is also an active hot air balloonist who organizes and participates in events in Poland.
Awards:	Montgolfier Diplome (2005)	Awards:	

Comments:

In the last America's Challenge in 2017, Krzysztof and Andy were one of the two teams to beat the 20+-year-old America's Challenge record. They flew nearly 2,200 miles (3526 km) and were only 90 miles short of winning the race before they ran out of real estate and resources.

In 2018, Andy Cayton and his co-pilot Bill Smith came very close to winning the Gordon Bennett and with it the world championships, with a nail-biter of a flight that included a water transit over the Mediterranean Sea. He's known as a determined, gutsy competitor whose achievements transcend ballooning. Andy has a distinguished record in military aviation, earning the Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal (x2), Air Medal with Valor, Air Medal, Army Accommodation Medal (x2), Army Achievement Medal (x2), Senior Aviator Badge, Parachutist Badge, Air Assault Badge, and Boeing Defense and Space Rescue Citation (x2). During a world record gas flight attempt, he had to avoid Area 51, the top-secret military testing installation in Nevada that some say harbors aliens. Air Traffic Control warned him he would be shot down if he didn't keep the proper clearance. That'll get your attention.

Krzysztof Zapart has an impressive international record in gas balloon distance races. He's finished second in every America's Challenge race he's competed in, and has three top five Gordon Bennett finishes. He says the fascination of gas ballooning is "freedom, friendship, and free flights," and credits Buzz Wills, a pilot from Amarillo, TX, for "starting his balloon dream."