

2002 - 7th America's Challenge Gas Balloon Race

Richard Abruzzo and NM Gov. Gary Johnson triumphed in the 7th America's Challenge distance race for gas balloons, held as part of the 2002 Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. Abruzzo and Johnson flew an impressive 1738.11 miles (2797.08 km), skirting Washington, D.C. airspace to land in Delaware just a few miles from the east coast. **Louis Vitanza and Bert Padelt** flew nearly 1,400 miles to finish second, landing near Sissonville, WV. **Mark Sullivan and Cheri White**, who landed near Homer, GA, after flying 1,271 miles, were third. Finishing fourth, just 47 miles behind, were **Frank Wechter and Tom Boylan**. Abruzzo and Johnson's flight is the second longest in the history of the America's Challenge race. The longest flight, 1,998 miles, was flown by David and Alan Levin in 2000. Both the Sullivan and Wechter teams bested the Levin brothers' old America's Challenge flight duration record of 66.1 hours. The pilots of the top three teams will be invited to represent the United States in next year's Coupé Aéronautique Gordon Bennett, the world's most prestigious gas balloon race. The race is traditionally held in the home country of the previous year's winners. The Leys brothers from France were victorious in last month's Gordon Bennett. Fourteen teams competed in the 2002 America's Challenge. Two other balloons flew as non-competitors.

Launch: 05-Oct-2002 Albuquerque, NM

Rank	Pilot/ Co-pilot	Country	Distance (KM)	Distance (Statute Miles)	Area of landing	Flight (Duration)
1	Abruzzo, Richard / Johnson, Gary	USA	2797.08	1738.11	Georgetown, DE	43.13
2	Vitanza, Louis / Padelt, Bert	USA	2250.65	1398.55	Sissonville, WV	35.58
3	Sullivan, Mark / White, Cheri	USA	2109.02	1310.55	Homer, GA	67.25
4	Wechter, Frank / Boylan, Thomas	USA	1971.18	1224.89	Franklin, GA	66.97
5	Levin, David / Levin, Alan	USA	1092.41	678.83	Galena, KS	22.22
6	McNutt, Phil / Critelli, Brian	USA	974.38	605.48	Caney, KS	47.42

7	Winker, Greg / Eimers, Wilhelm	USA/Ger.	965.64	600.05	Howard, KS	66.00
8	Wallace, J. Michael / Brielmann, Kevin	USA	771.15	479.19	Mina, OK	22.30
9	Gerhardt, Astrid / Haggenev, Dominik	Germany	681.42	423.43	Taloga, OK	22.90
10	Robinson, Shane / Martin, Ron	USA/Canada	494.03	306.99	White Deer, TX	10.72
11	Donnelly, Tom / Forster, Mike	Great Britain	364.19	226.31	Dalhart, TX	17.80
12	Kugler, John / Brown, Daniel	USA	320.42	199.11	Nara Visa, NM	11.08
13	Parks, Sam / Petrehn, Johnny	USA	131.72	81.85	Corona, NM	19.90
14	Bradley, Troy / Bradley, Tamara	USA	129.73	80.61	Las Vegas, NM	4.07

Non-competing pilots:

	Clinton, Paul / DeVaney, Mark	USA	199.94	124.24	Fort Sumner, NM	17.75
	Fricke, Barbara / Clayton -- Meyer	USA	276.57	171.86	Logan, NM	14.92

Final Tracking Image:



© 2009 Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, Inc.