

# The 66<sup>th</sup> Gordon Bennett Cup Launches from Balloon Fiesta

*Sixteen pilots representing nine countries take to the New Mexico Skies*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Albuquerque, NM** – The 66<sup>th</sup> Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett, sponsored by BayoTech, is underway. The Launch window for 17 hydrogen-filled gas balloons, representing nine countries, opened at 8:30pm, Saturday. With exception of France Team 3 which withdrew because of a leak in their envelope, all of the balloons lifted off from the same point. Launching over the span of an hour and a half, the gas balloons will follow a trajectory that will take them along Interstate-40 flying towards Oklahoma City.

The teams launched in the following sequence:

<b>Order</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Team</b>	<b>Pilots</b>
1	Poland	POL-1	Krzysztof Zapart, Pjtor Halas
2	Spain	ESP-1	Anulfo González, Angel Aguirre
3	United States	USA-3	Mark Sullivan, Cheri White
4	Germany	GER-1	Wilhelm Eimers, Benjamin Eimers
5	Austria	AUT-2	Christian Wagner, Stefanie Liller
6	France	FRA-1	Benoît Pelard, Benoît Petérlé
7	Lithuania	LTU-1	Robertas Komža, Romanas Mikelevičius
8	Switzerland	SUI-1	Balthasar Wicki, René Erni
9	United Kingdom	GBR-1	Deborah (Day) Scholes, John Rose
10	Poland	POL-2	Jacek Bogdański, Przemyslaw Mościcki
11	United States	USA-1	Noah Forden, Brenda Cowlshaw
12	Germany	GER-2	Benedict Munz, Matthias Schlegel
13	Austria	AUT-1	Gerald Stürzlinger, Helmut Meinhofer
14	France	FRA-2	Eric Decellières, Benoît Havret
15	United States	USA-2	Barbara Fricke, Peter Cuneo
16	Germany	GER-3	Max Michels, Andreas Michels
17	France	FRA-3	Hervé Moine, Christophe Blanchard

The world’s oldest and most prestigious air race, the 66<sup>th</sup> Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett is the world championship for long-distance gas ballooning. Two-member teams fly 1,000 cubic meter (approximately 35,000 cubic foot) hydrogen gas balloons. Balloons are equipped to fly for long distances, they cannot refuel in flight and complete their race upon landing. In previous years, competitors have traveled across the northeastern United States, some landing as far as Newfoundland, Canada. This year, the flight trajectories are funneling gas balloons toward eastern New Mexico, the Texas Panhandle and Oklahoma.

“The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta is proud to host this elite competition,” says Sam Parks, Executive Director. “We wish all the pilots good luck and safe flights.”

Among the competitors are last year's champions, Wilhelm Eimers and Benjamin Eimers (father and son) from Germany. Willi Eimers is a five-time Gordon Bennett champion and holds the race's duration record (92+hours) and the record for the number of times a pilot has competed in the race. Also flying are three U.S. teams, all of whom are previous America's Challenge champions: Noah Forden and Brenda Cowlshaw, Barbara Fricke and Peter Cuneo, and Mark Sullivan and Cheri White. More information on the competitors can be found, here: [https://balloonfiesta.com/files/galleries/Meet\\_the\\_Gordon\\_Bennett\\_Competitors\\_updated\\_10223\\_docx.pdf](https://balloonfiesta.com/files/galleries/Meet_the_Gordon_Bennett_Competitors_updated_10223_docx.pdf)

Each team will be equipped with YB Tracking technology. For the most up-to-date information and to track the balloons in real-time, please visit the official Gordon Bennett Cup website at <https://balloonfiesta.com/Gordon-Bennett-2023> and our dedicated tracking site at <https://live.gordonbennett.aero>. Exclusive coverage and insights can be found via [Gordon Bennett TV](#).

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#### **About the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta & Gordon Bennett Cup**

The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, powered by ExxonMobil, is the host for the 66<sup>th</sup> Gordon Bennett Cup. The Balloon Fiesta is a festival of hot air balloons that takes place in October in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. For details on events, schedule, entertainment and photographs visit our website [www.balloonfiesta.com](http://www.balloonfiesta.com) and follow us on Twitter [@BalloonFiesta](#) and Facebook.