



24TH FAI WORLD
HOT AIR BALLOON CHAMPIONSHIP
MURSKA SOBOTA 2022

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PRESS RELEASE

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WORLD HOT AIR BALLOON CHAMPIONSHIP

MURSKA SOBOTA 2022 - PRESS RELEASE: Swiss Stephan Zeberli triumphs at the World Balloon Championship in Murska Sobota, Slovenia

Murska Sobota, September 23, 2022 – The 24th FAI World Hot Air Balloon Championship Murska Sobota 2022 concluded today with the award ceremony at Rakičan Airport. Stephan Zeberli of Switzerland won the world competition among 103 pilots from 32 countries. Yudai Fujita of Japan was second and Nicolas Schwartz of France third. The best Slovenian was the current national champion Vito Rome in an excellent 6th place, this being the biggest success of Slovenian ballooning ever. The biggest ballooning spectacle in our country, with its spectacular views of a multitude of colourful balloons in the air, entertained many live and social media viewers throughout the week and enriched the tourist offer of Murska Sobota and the whole Pomurje region. This top sporting event is a great recognition for the organisers, the local Roto Balloon Club and the partners and co-organisers, the Municipality of Murska Sobota, the Aeronautical Association of Slovenia and the Aeroclub Murska Sobota. The next World Hot Air Balloon Championship will take place from September 8–14, 2024, in Szeged, Hungary.

The 2022 World Hot Air Balloon Championship took place in Murska Sobota from September 16 to 23, 2022. Thanks to good weather conditions, the organizers managed to complete all 10 flights scheduled during the five days of competition. Pilots from 32 countries and five continents were able to show their skills in various tasks such as the Hesitation Waltz, Land Run, Watership Down, etc., so that the general public could also get a taste of what ballooning competitions are all about. The competition was intense throughout. In the end, Stefan Zeberli (Switzerland) won with 24,403



points, followed by Yudai Fujita (Japan) with 23,147 points and Nicolas Schwartz (France) with 22,569 points. Among the Slovenes, Vito Rome lived up to the high expectations and showed that he is at the very top of this very interesting competitive sport. Jernej Bojanovič was 45th and Dejan Buzeti, who competes with the new Slovenian competition balloon "Štrkec", finished in 80th place. This top-category sporting event was held under the auspices of the FAI, the international aviation federation, and was organized by the local Roto Balloon Club in cooperation with the Municipality of Murska Sobota, the Aeronautical Association of Slovenia, and the Aeroclub Murska Sobota.

The awards were handed today at the Rakičan Airport in Murska Sobota by Štefan Pavlinjek, President of the Organizing Committee, and Matjaž Pavlinjek, President of the Roto Ballooning Club and Director of the Championship Organization. In addition to the medals for the top three, diplomas were also awarded to all female pilots. The women were represented by: reigning women's champion



Daria Dudkiewicz Golawska (Poland), Nicola Scaife (Australia), Laure De Coligny (France), Inga Van Haver (Latvia), Stephanie Hemmings (Great Britain) and Nicole Vogel (Switzerland).

A special mention was given to two pilots who had already participated in the 1994 European Championships in Murska Sobota, Uwe Schneider from Germany and Henk Broeders from the Netherlands.

The event was hosted by world-renowned aviation commentator Regan Tetlow from the USA and sports journalist Saša Jerkovič.

On this occasion, Bernardka Ružič, Vice-Mayor of the Municipality of Murska Sobota, thanked the Roto Ballooning Club for bringing such an important international competition to Pomurje. "As Vice-Mayor, I am extremely proud that our beautiful region has become the center of the balloonists' world for one week. The organization of such a big event required a great commitment from various players, and I am glad that, with commitment and enthusiasm, we managed to organize an event of this magnitude."

Ballooning has a long tradition in Slovenia, and the Pomurje plain is one of the most beautiful locations for hot-air ballooning, thanks to favorable winds and numerous landing opportunities. The unique sight of 130 colorful balloons in the air was a feast for the eyes and a spectacle like no other, which is why the World Championships were of great importance for Murska Sobota and the whole of Pomurje. "From the point of view of the development, visibility, and attractiveness of Murska Sobota, this was a unique opportunity to present our place as an interesting, boutique and green oasis for quality leisure, potential economic investment, and the creation of new stories."

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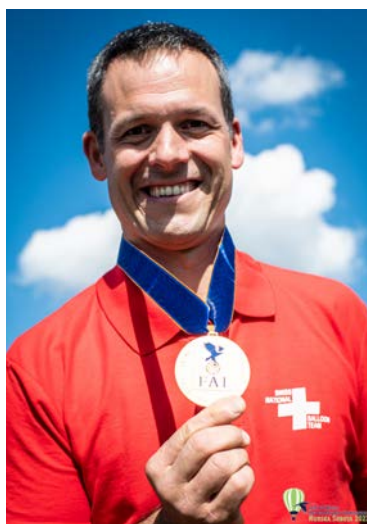
Prekmurje proved its hospitality in 1994 when it hosted the European Hot Air Balloon Championship. This year's organizing team, headed by Štefan and Matjaž Pavlinjek, put the icing on the cake by organizing the biggest international competition, putting Slovenia on the world map of top-class sporting events and ensuring excellent promotion of the sport and Slovenia's visibility in the world.

The next World Hot Air Balloon Championship will take place in Szeged, Hungary, from September 8 to 14, 2024.

The official page with the all the results of the competition is here https://watchmefly.net/events/event.php?e=worlds2022&v=tt&fbclid=IwAR0MCGswLwm_A10BDot_UpZ3fvkcUEd7ADTUBpK0wie0I6FLVCyl02lvCh

Link to photos (photo: Nina Lepoša): <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DQnu1STCUjFwS40CEfk0NoRVUACPtJSp?usp=sharing>

Photo: 2. place: Yudai Fujita, Japan, 1. place Stefan Zeberli (Switzerland), 3. place Nicolas Schwartz (France)

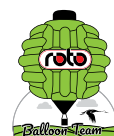


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