

## The new face of Spanish manufacturer By Franz Altmann

The shock was huge when the message arrived: Niviuk changed its importer and will be represented in Germany and Austria by **Eric and Caroline Walketseder**, as well as Jochen and Petra Vorderegger. We wanted to know, of course, who was the new importer, what reasons stand behind this step, what strategies has Niviuk in mind for the German-speaking world and, of course, how the new products are. The *Super Paragliding Festival* in Kössen was the ideal location for talking about and flying together.

### Meeting in Kössen

When arriving at the Thermomesse and at the Stubai-Cup, Niviuk's new presence caught the eye. At the *Super Paragliding Festival* the Spanish manufacturer was no longer to be overlooked: huge pylons, several tents, a powerful test stand and a multi-headed black-green-dressed team. And also the presence of Dominique Cizeau, founder and CEO of Niviuk.

We meet the rest of the team in Kössen, like Caroline and Herbert Tamegger, who were about to fly together with the *Bi Skin 2 P*.

### The Vorderegger duo

Petra and Jochen give us an idyllic picture of an aviation couple: They are always seen together! A duo that shares everything: leisure, work and the marriage bed for 11 years. Jochen, a "gusst man" including a woodcutter beard, has been an aviator since '89. "Jochen has been in sales all his life, that makes him much more relaxed than me", Petra tells me later. He is purposeful - a "no" is not accepted for the time being. Petra is clearly the more communicative of the two, she flits from one conversation to another, takes care of everything and everyone. In between, she laughs again and again. A lively, funny and squeaky personality - all the qualities that match their years of stay abroad in Ireland, Australia and France. This is also highly motivated - ideal for the new job. Petra doesn't fly anymore, but she is probably on a tandem with Jochen. In addition, she sees herself as ground staff for the beloved husband. "I'll drive him up and get him off", she says with a laugh.

## **How did this deal happen?**

"I've been looking for a new importer for several years" says Dominique. "We are very strong in France and Spain, but we sell almost nothing in the German-speaking market", the boss was clearly dissatisfied.

He didn't want to believe that the main reason was the missing LTF, which is obligatory for Germany. "I have a lot of experience and Niviuk has been around for 13 years. We're making the best gliders", he explains with conviction. In addition, the sales in Austria were also unsatisfactory, although Dominique had the same credo as in France: "*Vol libre*".

When I asked Petra and Jochen about their motivation to enter the market of THAT size, Jochen answers: "First of all, we are not newcomers. I have already imported in the 90s". They sold their pellets company *Biotech* by the end of 2015. "After the break, we wanted to go back to a project with true heart". So they went on the search for a serious partner with whom one could talk professionally.

## **The importance of small details**

While hundreds of gliders are circling over us, Dominique tells the differences between the first and the second Skin generation. One was concentrated on the flight behavior in turbulences, which had become more comfortable with a new profile and smaller cells with the Shark Nose. "We have the technology - why don't use it?" There is also a trimmer on the Skin – unusual in a solo. "It comes from the Tandem Bi Skin" tells Dominique. The landings with the first two-seater protos were a disaster", he admits openly. "Until one test pilot forgot to close the trimmer and suddenly the problems were gone". Therefore, the trimmer was also used on the solo, which only increases the speed of 4 km/h, but achieves significantly better flare behavior. Every detail on the Skin 2 is explained to us exactly. It was the details that mattered. The Skin 2 was the most technically complex project in the company's history - it took more than 40 prototypes and four years to realize the glider as it is now.

## Niviuk's new direction

The new P-Series (Niviuk's name for light-weight gliders), the single Skins and not least the X-Alps' glider, the Klimber P. All show a new direction towards lightweight construction. But how did this philosophy come about? Just a few years ago, Niviuk focused on paramotor and competition.

"The PPG market is difficult", says Dominique. Although Niviuk is very well represented, the focus was too much on speed and too little on take-off and landings. It didn't correspond to the company philosophy of Niviuk". However, he recognized that as a manufacturer he had no choice. "If you are not in the *light market*, you are non-existent".

## Flights

After a good hour, we started to fly. My colleague Astrid Eder flew with the Skin 2 (size 16), Dominique with an Artik 4, Petra and Jochen under the Takoo 3, my colleague Philipp Ott and I with a Klimber P. Caro and Herbert, as mentioned at the beginning, flew with a Bi Skin 2 P. A real Niviuk pack comes in, we turn together in soft evening thermics. Dominique, who seems to be more determined and serious, was stimulated by the fantastic scenery and the grandiose flying experience and cheers in the air. Petra's laughter can also be heard, she doesn't seem to be speechless even when flying. I took a few photos and enjoy the flight. **Niviuk, I just want the wish you the best for your comeback!**