



MEDIA RELEASE

9 SEPTEMBER 2023

Australian Nicola Scaife soars to her third victory in the FAI Women's World Hot Air Balloon Championship in Northam

Australian pilot Nicola Scaife has taken out her third title in the Women's World Hot Air Balloon Championship, contested by 30 of the world's best female pilots this week in Northam, Western Australia.

The 38-year-old from Newcastle NSW had her eye on the prize from the event's start on Monday, saying she was highly motivated to win a third title in her home country.

"I was really clear on what I wanted the week to look like and my team and I executed the vision so well. I couldn't be happier!" Nicola said.

"I am also so impressed with our whole Australian team. This was the first world championship event for the four other Australian pilots, they were focussed and embraced the experience and their fantastic results reflect that.

"Ballooning is a small community. To win in my own country amongst my friends and so many familiar faces, people that have supported and encouraged my journey over the last decade, to share it with our community, it's an incredible feeling.

"The teams have been so impressed with the event organisation and volunteers, the way the community of Northam has embraced the event. I have heard many positive comments and know that this welcome, and many peoples first impressions of Australia, will not be forgotten.

"I'm exhausted after the week of competition, but it is all slowly sinking in. My third world championship title, so wild!"

Australian Ballooning Federation President Martin Tregale conveyed his congratulations to Nicola for taking the hat-trick. "We are all so really proud of Nicola's achievement winning her third World Women's Championship and especially special to win this week on home soil."

Runner up in this week's competition was Stephanie Hemmings from the UK and in third place Sanne Haarhuis from the Netherlands.

Stephanie has been involved in ballooning from a young age, participating in every British Nationals - finishing second in 2021, and numerous Junior World Championships and European Championships.

"I'm so happy to have finished on the podium after a tough week," she said.

"A huge thank you goes to my crew and the rest of team GB who have supported me all week, not just



in flying, but also to look after my four-month-old daughter. I hope I can inspire other women with young children to compete,” Stephanie said.

Sanne comes from a family of hot air balloonists and has competed in all Women’s World Championships.

“It has been an honour and a pleasure to fly amongst these amazing women and in this beautiful area. I was hoping for a top 10 finish. My result exceeded my expectation.

“The support of organisers and local crew was fantastic.”

5th Women’s World Hot Air Ballooning Championship Jury President Debbie Spaeth conveyed her thanks to organisers for a great week of competition.

“Our thanks to the Northam Ballooning organisation for their work to make this 5th FAI Women’s World Hot Air Balloon Championship a great event.

“They handled the delays and changes dealt to the world due to Covid-19, bringing this event to a successful conclusion. And they also got mother nature to bring in the good flying weather. Well done.

“Our thanks also to the team of volunteers that kept the ‘infrastructure’ in place, always with a smile. From sausages and breakfast at the Northam Aero Club, to propane, to all the other details the pilots and crews didn’t have to worry about, thanks to all. And finally, thanks to the team of officials assembled by Event Director, Gary Lacey. Congratulations to his team.”

This is the first year the Championships has been held outside of Europe and pilots completed 20 tasks in seven individual flights over the course of the week in ideal ballooning conditions.

Pilots will be formally awarded at a closing ceremony this afternoon.

The Women’s World Hot Air Ballooning Championship is officially sanctioned by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI) and supported by the Shire of Northam, Tourism Western Australia, Windward Ballooning, Bendigo Bank Northam, Australian Ballooning Federation and Northam Aero Club and a number of local businesses.

For more information visit:

- northamballooningevents.com
- [Northam Ballooning Events on Facebook](#)
- [FAI Ballooning Commission on Facebook](#)
- fai.org (sanctioning body)
- watchmefly.net (competition details)
- FAI Women With Wings program: fai.org/women-wings (encouraging women in air sports)

Media contact

Janine Pittaway at jpittaway@brightcommunications.com.au or 0418911796

Photo downloads:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/touc2t0hzhdtqbxmumiae/h?rlkey=ab4blcy3hqnk16evbbaocwci&dl=0>

Vision doanloads:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/i4tc8yw4w91r20wxervxv/h?rlkey=d9i5zg1bfip6w47iidwvdp5k6&dl=0>