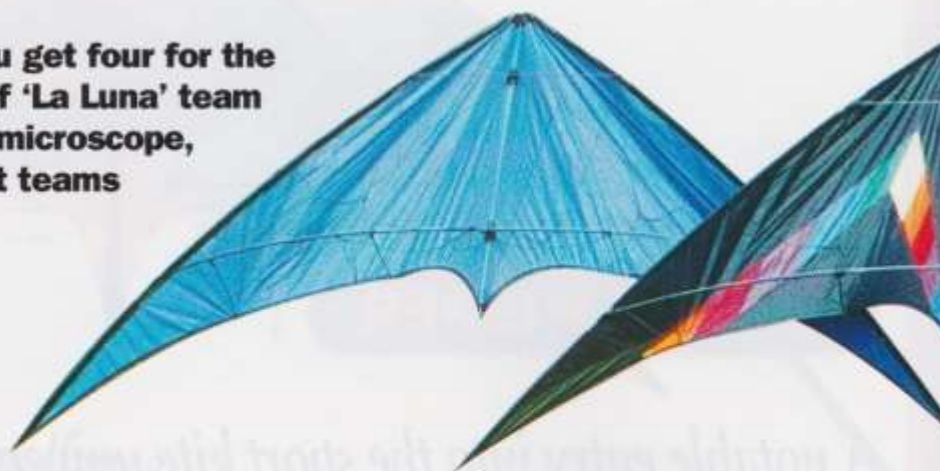


In this month's Focus Test you get four for the price of one: the new range of 'La Luna' team kites from Elliot is under the microscope, scrutinised by one of the best teams around — Kéops.



La Luna - Elliot Range

Still fresh from his transfer to Elliot, Christophe Fokken's first effort is a new range of kites aimed at the team flyer, however the kite has properties which the individual members of the team could quite happily go off and exploit on their own.

DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION

When setting the kite up, it looks as though there is a tensioning line between the top and bottom spreaders. It's based on a cross-turbo with a supplementary line which comes from the top spreader connector on the leading edge to halfway along the out-haul. The long continuous leg is fitted as standard, fixed at the top point of the supplementary bridle. The incidence is controlled with a set of knots, to which the long leg is lark's head knotted. There are a set of 4 knots about 15mm apart. It's a complex bridle but very easy to adjust. However, the complexities don't stop there. The long leg which adjusts incidence is made up of two parts with loops at each end. Where the two parts meet there is a further leg which

runs out to the leading edge and acts as a third support on the leading edge to prevent the wing deforming, and helps with precision. The bridle is very easy to use but its complexity would inevitably pose problems should one part ever break and need replacing. The bridle itself is made from 200lbs sleeved Dyneema so this risk is fairly distant.

The La Luna has 4 stand-offs with two of these having adjustable positions. Unlike most other kites, the outer set of stand-offs are the adjustable ones. The instructions say: "Put the stand-offs further from the centre for more precision and closer to the centre for more freestyle". This has an influence on the way the kite flies in the freestyle position: turns are more skiddy and it is less easy regaining a straight line. Spikes are easier and the axels are a little flatter. The vented version seems to fly better in the freestyle position, when its turns are crisper and there is less risk of the wing flapping when exiting a tight turn. The kite can be tuned to the individual flyer's taste. The clips which hold the stand-offs into the sail don't look like they will stand up to

LA LUNA UL/ELLIOT

Wingspan: 250cm
Sail: Polyester, 27 panels
Frame: G-Force UL
Bridle: Specific
Fittings: APA + HQ
Opt. wind range: 13 to 20mph
Rec. lines: 80 to 150lbs, 115 to 130ft
Price zone: Around £150

repeated changes — changing them for Jaco type sail grabbers might be a wise move.

FLIGHT TEST

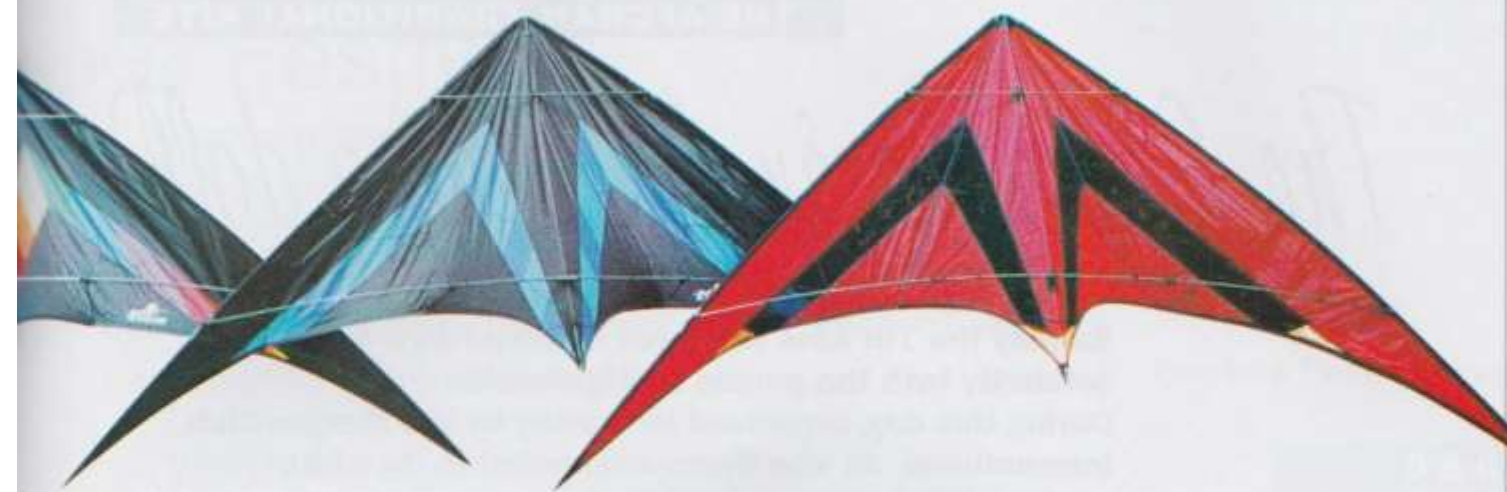
Have you ever had the feeling that it is the kite which is in control instead of you? This is somewhat the case with the La Luna. From its first take-off there is a feeling of steadiness, no wobbles in the first few feet. The sensation is confirmed by the first straight line, it feels like it is on rails and you feel as though you'd have to wait to get to the edge of the window before turning. Fortunately turning the kite is very simple and snap turns are crisp and lively — so much so that the kite could easily do a succession of sharp angles and six step square cuts despite its 265cm wingspan. Confidence with the kite increased after only a few minutes of flying and we were

soon doing ground passes inches above the soil with no stress. Round turns, tight or carved, upward or downward were easy with the kite returning to its line of flight without skidding or sliding; control of the loop size was perfect. All this adds up to a precision kite of rare quality. Stops and stalls were easy and clean as were side slides where the kite could do a 3/4 window slide consistently.

Turning to freestyle/tricks, there were no major problems. The La Luna is by no means an out and out trick kite but its repertoire is wide enough for most team flyers. Axels, either fast or slow, no problem; fades, poison ivy and 540s were also achievable, but cascades were more difficult. Turtles were disconcertingly easy, the kite was stable on its back and a simple pull on the lines would quickly get it back into position. The

LA LUNA SUL/ELLIOT

Wingspan: 250cm
Sail: Polyester, 7 panels
Frame: Carbon: 4mm + 5mm + Skinny
Bridle: Specific
Fittings: Durit + Jaco
Opt. wind range: 2 to 5mph
Rec. lines: 50 to 100lbs, 75 to 115ft
Price zone: Around £150



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Standard kite will even do a flic-flac from a fade.

On the ground, the kite seemed a little less happy at first. The 'factory setting' made spikes difficult and the kite wanted to land with two points, although this is an advantage for landings especially in competition compulsory figures with a landing. Axel take-offs could be done but care has to be taken to slacken the lines to prevent a tangle on the tail. Coin tosses were delicate for the same reason. Leading edge take-offs could only be done on the edges of the wind window. In the centre the kite would just rock from one side to the other (it was even more difficult in higher wind).

Such a good kite should be able to be adapted to all wind conditions. This is the approach with the Indoor, UL, Standard and Vented versions now available, enough to equip a team with a kite for all conditions with the same flight characteristics.

The Indoor version was tested both inside and out and will take winds up to 5mph without difficulty. It flies slowly and majestically, on long 150 feet lines precision was excellent and speed was regular. The kite

was similar to its brothers with the addition of the ability to do a 'dead leaf'. Inside on 35 feet lines, the kite gives a remarkable amount of feedback down the lines, with one pull it is practically overhead. Its size does however limit its trick capability, axels are slow and fades are executed easily but recovery is delicate. This kite is perhaps better suited to outdoor flight in zero or very light wind. The kite has the capacity to take the odd crash without breaking. However be a little careful with ground work — it is framed with Skinmys in the leading edge and lower spreaders, 5mm carbon in the spine and a 4mm carbon top spreader.

The UL version is in our opinion the best of the bunch. Its performance is assured across all flight conditions. It will take off in as little as 2mph of wind, flying assured horizontal lines at the top of the window. Its trick performance is good, although when the wind gets up to 15mph tricks require more care to be able to achieve them. Precision and straight line flight is not affected although the speed increases slightly.

LA LUNA VENTED/ELLIOT

Wingspan: 250cm
Sail: Polyester, 11 panels
Frame: G-Force Std
Bridle: Specific
Fittings: APA + HQ
Opt. wind range: 30 to 40mph
Rec. lines: 150lbs, 115 to 130ft
Price zone: Around £150

The Standard version tracks well and maintains a high level of precision, although axels are very tricky to get just right, especially in light wind; the nose of the kite rises quickly during the rotation and if the kite is not guided back towards the horizontal, there is a tendency for lines to catch on the tail or wing tip. This problem (which is only perceptible on the standard version) makes cascades difficult, they need care and practise to avoid problems. This model would therefore benefit from a trick line. We thought that inertia in the kite due to the 6mm Exel frame was the cause of the problem, which did not appear on the Ultra Light version. This version maintained its good flight quality in winds right up to 18mph and remained perfectly controllable.

The vented version is again well balanced and flies from 8mph of wind. It was tested in up to 22mph of wind and didn't pull at all in this wind range. The kite flew well with good tight angles and regular carved turns. At higher wind speeds, the kite will axel with practise; its bridle, which is much longer than those of the other versions, has a tendency to wrap around the tail and a trick line would again be an asset on this version. Landings in high winds pose few problems and are always on two points.

CONCLUSION

The whole range is consistent and requires no change of flying style when moving from one model to another, something which owes a lot to the set up of the bridling of each kite.

Ultimately the report is very positive: after a month of testing in winds from zero to 30mph, the range did not present a single major problem; minor items we have mentioned seem like nit picking when we look at the overall qualities of the range.

The La Luna is a good kite for the individual for either simple leisure or competition flying. Its high standard of precision ability for tricks make it an all-round class act, but the kite truly excels for team flyers. With its regular, slow-medium speed, it is well suited to team flying. The ability of the kite to execute sharp turns allows for dynamic routines, add to that the kite's presence and you have a kite which will certainly give a lot of pleasure to a team whether starting out or expert.

LA LUNA STD/ELLIOT

Wingspan: 250cm
Sail: Polyester, 27 panels
Frame: Exel Std
Bridle: Specific
Fittings: Exel
Opt. wind range: 13 to 20mph
Rec. lines: 150lbs 115 to 130ft
Price zone: Around £110