

Mansoor Wamala

It all started with the 7 hour coach journey from London to Derbyshire Peak district, from looking at tall building and barely seeing the sky to a beautiful array of greenery and nicely trimmed fields, it must have been the first time in a while to scent the clean air from the plants and trees so fresh that my nose watered from the pollen shed of the flowers, the view was unreal and as an estate kid I only viewed the park as the prettiest place, on arrival I saw buildings shorter than I'm used to seeing looking pretty old and the bus stop shades a bit rusty. I then embarked on the route to the gliding club a long stretch with no building on either side of the road just grass fields and the road so narrow.

I received a warm welcome on my way into the gliding club facilities, and I was showed around quickly so that I could catch up with the other scholarship winners that had arrived earlier that day, fresh off the coach journey I was immediately taught how to drive the retrieval tractors which set us up for fast retrieval of the gliders that landed, this helped me get to know all the other boys as we taught each other how to drive the tractors on the first day.

We gathered up in the common room and everyone got the chance to introduce themselves, we played some card games which helped build our chemistry. It was surprising that we were from different stretches of the country and abroad. I was from London and the others were from Huddersfield, Newbury, Surrey, Poland and Scotland. The accommodation at the club was lovely with a nice view from the window and plenty of room to feel comfortable.

One of the highlights of the week was the meal options on the menu, I'm confident to say it was a 5-star service because everything I requested was provided. To top it all off the welfare manager was really entertaining and she cared for us, we had lots of laughs and story time with her and that made the experience so special.

The structure of the day was inclusive, I always had something to do from practicing DI checks on the tractors to driving them up to the hanger to taking out the gliders and doing the glider condition checks and finally to towing the glider up the hill to the launch point. This kept me active and we worked very well as a team.

Flying, there were so many imaginations I had in my head, mainly because of the excitement I had from the beginning, I was waiting patiently to be called up for my turn baring in mind it was my very first time, stepping into the glider my body was filled with joy, thinking "finally I get to do what I love", I had no sense of fear neither was I nervousness. The adrenaline beat the fear I possibly had which was key in terms of me opening to learning as much as possible in the air from the instructor.

On the first launch I absorbed the thrill of flying from climbing 1500 ft to hill soaring and landing back at the reference, this feeling gave me the impression that this is what I want to do for most of my life, not many people get to experience it and I did. I enjoyed getting used to the instruments in the glider and understanding how they help impact the ability of the glider. Capturing the view from the front seat of the glider and having that reference in mind really affected how I learnt day by day. I got used to the behaviour of my glider at a fast pace, and as my instructor kept on saying "Don't let the glider fly you, fly the glider".

I learnt how to fly a glider, considering all the principles of flight and the behaviour of the weather. However, this experience was not all about flying, it was getting to socialise with people from

different parts of the world, living with each other, team work, listening to instructions, patience, respect, the essence of procedure as well as the level of maturity required to become a pilot.