



NIVIUK IKUMA

Marcus King takes Niviuk's new high-end EN B out in early Spring thermals



The Ikuma is Niviuk's first 'high-end B', fitting the gap between the Hook and the EN-C Artik. Niviuk describe it as "sportier than a standard EN-B glider and less demanding than an EN-C, but with its same high performance."

The wing is aimed at pilots wanting "improved performance for cross-country flying without compromising safety." With this in mind I took the wing out on some of the first good spring-like days of the season to see what it had to offer.

Launching, the wing has no tendency to overshoot, and in lower winds needs a steady pull on the As until it is above your head. Once there it requires little control to keep it there; releasing the brakes it will accelerate off the hill.

In the air the Ikuma has a very calm nature. Pitch is beautifully controlled on this wing with

very little surging. Entering a thermal the wing has a nice neutral balance. It doesn't bite forward into the thermals as some wings do. Neither is there any tendency for it to sit back. I didn't have to wait for the wing to surge before I could start squeezing on the brakes. It just feels cool, calm and collected.

Climbing out

A well-known blogger suggested in his review that the Ikuma doesn't have very good climbing ability. After flying the wing for over ten hours in the thermals of the south of France I couldn't find any problems with its ability to climb. Flying the wing smack bang in the middle of the weight range I had no problem keeping up with the mixture of wings around me: high-end Bs like the Mentor 4, Cs such as Delta 2s and Sigma 9s and a few prototypes. More often than

▲ GOOD PERFORMANCE

Niviuk have firmly set their sights on the popular high-end EN B market segment with the Ikuma, aiming the wing at pilots who want passive security with lots of usable performance.

◀ FINISHED PRODUCT

The glider looks good in the air and has a calm, controlled nature. It's a very collected wing that is up to date with all today's expected features.

Photos: Charlie King



▲ BLUEBIRD

A blue day in early spring in the southern French Alps
Photo: Charlie King

not I would be climbing out on top of the stack. When I carried an extra 8.5kg of water for a final test, I didn't find any significant increase in sink rate and still found it easy to climb and get away from the site.

In thermals there is a nice level of information transferred through the brakes. It is conveyed smoothly in a very polite fashion, not the incessant chatter of a small child, more the well thought-out input of a wise sage.

The brake travel is quite long and has a nice linear effect. Although it doesn't have the immediacy maybe of some C wings its linear behaviour allows you to precisely control the

wing. Coming off the Swing Nexus, a good example of a middle C, I found the first part of the brakes not effective or dynamic but the overall brake pressure lighter. This makes for a wing that has slightly more forgiving handling but still with the ability to core nicely with a bit more brake applied.

In a couple of broken strong thermals I did feel the need to kick in a bit more weightshift occasionally to keep it turning nicely. Loading the wing up to near the top of the range made this less of an issue. The reasonably light brake pressure meant my arms weren't tired after several hours in the air.



Construction

This is very much a wing of the current mode. Up front there is an obvious sharknose design on the intakes. Niviuk are using Nitinol rather than nylon rods to keep the shaping in the nose area. They claim it is more resistant to deformation and high temperatures such as when you leave your wing in a car; they still recommend concertina packing.

At the rear you will find mini-ribs on the trailing edge and the brakes attach using loops to spread the braking action across the trailing edge.

The line set uses A, B and C mains with a bifurcation up high to D-tabs in the centre section

of the span. All the lines are unsheathed and a natural brown colour, the only differentiation is a small bit of coloured sheathing near the maillons. This lack of colour can make sorting lines slightly harder but as there are only two main A and B lines and three C lines on each side it isn't too difficult. The main lines are reassuringly thick despite being unsheathed.

The risers are well finished as you would expect from a brand whose strapline is "the importance of small details", right down to the branded pulleys. One nice touch is the fact that the thin racy risers flare out at the attachment point, so they don't slip around in the karabiners as some wings do.

▲ NEW BOY AT SCHOOL

The lines are unsheathed and colour-coded only near the maillons. The risers feature C-handles for gliding at speed. One of the best things about the wing is pulley-to-pulley gliding is very comfortable. All the speed is usable. Photo: Marcus King



▲ CLIMB RATE

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Photo: Charlie King

► IN THE DETAIL

Sharknose and set-back A-tabs

Branded pulleys – nice touch!

Unsheathed lines

Photos: Marcus King

FAI triangles

During my time with the wing I got to take it on a couple of FAI triangles around our local hills. The routes involved downwind dashes and pushing into wind, a good test of the wing's performance.

On glide the bar is easy and smooth to use with a moderate pressure. It gives a 12-13km/h increase in speed from trim according to our Flymaster TAS probe, calibrated by Oxford University in their wind tunnel. On glide with other wings it was keeping up with a Sigma 9 and Mentor 4 Light but the Mentor was maybe 1-2 km/h quicker. Full bar is completely usable – I spent a lot of my time cruising pulley to

pulley as we had climbs averaging more than 2 m/s. Niviuk have fitted nice neoprene-covered C-handles to the risers but to be honest I am not sure why you need them. Sure it is nice to get feedback from them, but this wing is really solid and reassuring at full throttle. At one point I was heading to a distant cloud, enjoying the view so much that I had to remind myself I was supposed to be reviewing the wing: it's so easy I wasn't thinking about it, which says a lot in my book.

Big ears

At one point I found myself approaching airspace



In conclusion

Some will have you think that performance figures are the be-all and end-all, but wings like the Ikuma show that this just isn't the case. The pilot that flies furthest is often the one having the most fun or most at ease with their wing. Niviuk have crafted that brilliant mix of reassuring behaviour with enough feel to let you make good use of thermals.

Sure, the top speed won't be breaking any records but you can happily sit with the pulleys touching all day without the mental overload that some higher-level wings will give you.

Every ounce of performance in this wing is usable. And that is this wing's strength: a wing you make the most of on those big thermal days out in the mountains. **EC**

Marcus King flew the 27 size at 104 kg and at 112kg for more than 10 hours in the southern French Alps with an Advance Impress 3 harness

Manufacturer's specification

What Niviuk say: "Sportier than a standard EN-B glider and less demanding than an EN-C, but with its same high performance"

Use: XC flying

Pilot level: Current and improving XC pilots

Sizes: 21, 23, 25, 27, 29

Take-off weight (kg): 55-75, 65-85, 80-100, 95-115, 110-130

Cells: 57

Aspect Ratio: 5.7

Weight (kg): 4.4 – 5.7

Certification: EN B

Niviuk.com



from below. With only two lines the big ears resulting from pulling one from each side are pretty big. I found they thrashed around quite a bit. There was no feeling of sitting back though and when released they rolled out smoothly. Adding bar gave a nice sink rate and the speed to get away from the lift.

I later read the manual and Niviuk recommend using the outer-B method (they call it 3B2 method) using the B2 line which is on its own riser. When used I found this more stable with a good rate of descent. Wingovers and spirals are easy to build up and control without being overly dynamic.

