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# Gliding was the Winner on the day

*They paid for time with the All Black's Captain and fell in love with gliding.*

**Contributed by Jill McCaw**

**IN A TWIST** on the usual "spend time with a celebrity" fundraising auction, respondents were bidding to fly in a glider with All Black Captain Richie McCaw as their pilot. And two women were the lucky winners. Neither had any aeronautical experience and were as nervous about the flying part of the prize as they were about meeting their hero. They both landed with huge smiles on their faces, blown away by the flight itself as well as the time spent aloft with Richie.

Richie holds an instructors rating and is fully qualified to take people gliding. The flights were bona fide trial flights; they just cost more than usual. He gave the full pre-flight briefing, explaining how the glider flies, what the controls and instruments do and what to expect in the air. He also let his students have a turn at the controls once they were flying.

The auctions were the brainchild of Canterbury Gliding Club member John Ahern. He says, "When considering promotional activities, you have to keep in mind that if you want media coverage you have to have an interesting story to tell - something customers can connect with."

Winner of the IRB Player of the Year for the last three years, high profile Canterbury Gliding Club member Richie McCaw is an international star. He is an all-round good guy but his time is precious and gliding is an escape from the high energy life he leads. He was happy to be involved in the fundraising effort. The idea to auction trial flights with Richie as the instructor ticked a lot of boxes, including that there could be world-wide involvement through the internet and that all gliding clubs would benefit. Of course the gliding club wanted to make money from the auctions but it was important to also have a charity involved. The club is based in Hororata and earning money to help rebuild Hororata's quake damaged historic church made good sense. Choosing the All Black's official charity KidsCan as the beneficiary for the second auction meant the All Blacks agreed to put the auction story on their web and social networks sites.

The auction would run for 10 days and TradeMe put it on their 'Hot Auctions' page. It was linked from the All Black's web site, which also featured it on their Twitter and FaceBook pages. The All Black's FaceBook site is the largest in NZ and over 600,000 members received that link. The first auction on TradeMe attracted over 12,000 hits.

The flights were carefully scheduled to fit Richie's time off and

so not to interfere with any All Blacks commitments - something the fans and bidders could really relate to.

Richie works well with the media and the event caused quite a bit of interest. Jendy Harper from TV3's Campbell Live came out to cover the flights with cameraman Christie Douglas. The pair spent all day at the club filming club members and action - and finding more of a story than just that of the auctions. Richie's family involvement in the sport of gliding also made it into the story. The TV story only covered one winner, but contrary to the way things appeared on the TV there were two auctions and two winners.

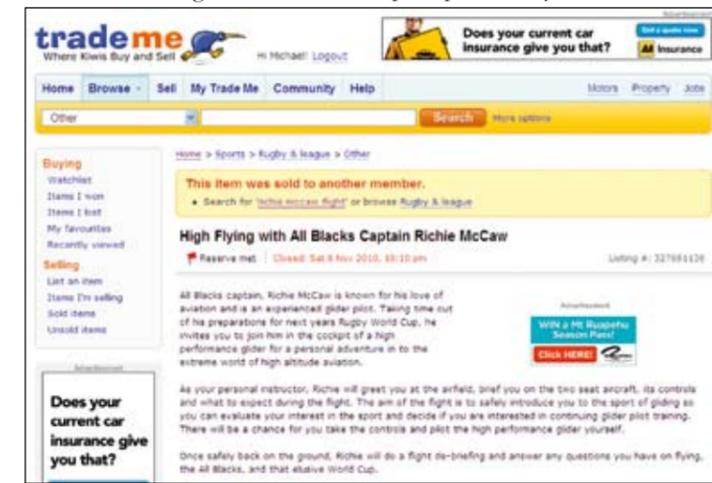
First up to fly was Chloe from Palmerston North. She had the flight paid for by her boyfriend David. She didn't want to be on the television but was happy to be photographed.

During her flight she was thrilled when World Record holder Terry Delore swooped past in his glider, performing aerobatics. She asked Richie if they could do the same and enjoyed several loops before they landed. Kristina Vuckovic, a mad Crusaders and All Blacks fan from Sydney, was incredibly nervous about meeting her hero, but he quickly put her at ease. She loved the gliding part of the prize. In fact she was so enthused by the experience of gliding that she says she forgot she had Richie McCaw in the back seat. She is now learning to fly at a club near her home.

Campbell Live ran the story the following Monday night with more than five minutes of prime-time coverage - plus six promotional spots before and during the 6pm news. They tied it into Valentine's day calling the flights a "date" with Richie McCaw. It's hard to put a value on positive exposure like this, but the auction money raised pales in comparison to the value of the media coverage received. Both women thoroughly enjoyed their prize, the gliding club loved the publicity, and the Hororata Church repair fund and KidsCan were both delighted to receive the funds. And Richie enjoyed spending time showing his sport to two fans.

To see the Campbell Live footage go to the TV3 News Website and search 'Woman pays for date with Richie McCaw'. And how much did she pay? The second auction raised \$4620 for KidsCan, and the first raised \$2640 split 70/30 between the Hororata Church and Gliding Club.

For more information on gliding, visit the Gliding New Zealand website [www.gliding.co.nz](http://www.gliding.co.nz) For subscriptions to SoaringNZ, email: [soaringnz@mccawmedia.co.nz](mailto:soaringnz@mccawmedia.co.nz)



One of the TradeMe auctions received more than 12000 page views.



Richie McCaw briefing Kristina Vuckovic (from Sydney) before her flight.