

Austrian daredevil to make new space jump bid Sunday (Update)

October 14 2012, by Michael Thurston



Handout photo shows Austrian daredevil Felix Baumgartner after a successful test flight for Red Bull Stratos in July. He is preparing to make a new attempt Sunday to jump from the edge of space, days after his initial bid was aborted at the last minute due to the weather.

An Austrian daredevil is preparing to make a new attempt Sunday to jump from the edge of space, days after his initial bid was aborted at the last minute due to the weather.

[Felix Baumgartner](#) will be transported up to 23 miles (37 kilometers) above the New Mexico desert by an enormous balloon, before launching himself into the void, aiming to become the first human to break the [sound barrier](#) in [freefall](#).

UPDATE: [Austrian daredevil succeeds in space jump \(LIVE webcast\)](#)

If successful, he will go down in the record books. If not, he could face serious consequences, including death. Organizers say if weather prevents an attempt Sunday, they could try again on Monday.

The 43-year-old was seconds away from lift-off in the US state of New Mexico on Tuesday when organizers decided to cancel because his huge, gossamer-thin balloon was buffeted badly, even while still on the ground.

But conditions seem favorable for Sunday morning. "The preliminary weather outlook is promising for another try at a leap for the ages," organizers said in an eve-of-leap update Saturday.

Baumgartner himself said he was "rested and ready to go" for the new jump.

"I'm here with my family and friends who are all super supportive. I go to the gym and try to keep myself fit. I've done all of my homework and had all of my briefings with the team I trust," he said.

He added he would be proud to be the first person to break the speed of sound in freefall.

"But really, I know that part of this entire experience will help make the next pressure suit safer for space tourists and aviators," the jumper pointed out.

The forecast for Sunday morning is good—clear skies and winds of less than 3 km/h at the ground and not much stronger at the top of the balloon.

"Such conditions occur only one to two days a week at this time of the year. ... Sunday and Monday look favorable," said the organizers, who say the weather window will be open from roughly 6:45-11:00 am (1245-1700 GMT).



Handout photo shows Austrian daredevil Felix Baumgartner lifting up during a test flight in July. He was seconds away from lift-off on Tuesday when mission control decided to cancel it because the balloon taking him up was buffeted badly.

A very large balloon is needed to carry the [Red Bull](#) Stratos capsule, which weighs nearly 1.3 tons, to the stratosphere.

The [balloon](#) that is expected to be used on Sunday is constructed of nearly transparent polyethylene strips about the same thickness as a dry cleaner bag, which are heat-sealed together. Very thin material is necessary to save weight.

The ascent is expected to take between two and three hours. If all goes well, the descent will take about 15 to 20 minutes—five minutes or so in freefall, and 10 to 15 floating down with his [parachute](#).

The entire attempt will be beamed live by [broadcasters](#) around the world, and online—although with a 20-second delay in case something goes wrong, so that organizers can cut the feed.

The biggest risk he faces is spinning out of control, which could exert G forces and make him lose consciousness. A controlled dive from the capsule is essential, putting him in a head-down position to increase speed.

More gruesomely, the [skydiver](#)'s blood could boil if there were the slightest tear or crack in his pressurized spacesuit-like outfit, due to instant depressurization at the extreme altitude.



Felix Baumgartner lands in the desert after a successful test flight for Red Bull Stratos in July. "The preliminary weather outlook is promising for another try at a leap for the ages," organizers said in an eve-of-leap update Saturday.

Temperatures of 90 degrees below zero Fahrenheit (minus 68 Celsius) could also have unpredictable consequences if his suit somehow fails.

"If there is a mishap, Mission Control is on it and would absolutely cut the feed," spokeswoman Sarah Anderson told AFP.

Baumgartner aims to break at least three records: the highest freefall leap, the fastest speed ever achieved by a human and become the first person to break the sound barrier of around 690 miles (1,110 kilometers) per hour in freefall.

The Austrian has been training for five years for the jump. He holds several previous records, notably with spectacular base jumps from the

Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur and the Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Baumgartner's 100-strong backup team includes retired US Air Force colonel Joe Kittinger, who holds one of the records he is trying to break: the highest freefall jump, which he made from 102,800 feet (31,333 meters) in 1960.

The Austrian—who aims to jump from 120,000 feet (36,576 meters)—says he has put the disappointment of last week's aborted leap behind him, as he focuses on the new attempt. "I think it's important that people keep talking about it.

"Now that they've seen how hard it is to launch, I think they'll appreciate what they see even more. If it were easy, it would not have taken 52 years to get close to achieving what Joe Kittinger did in 1960," he said.

The experiment coincides with the 65th anniversary of American pilot Chuck Yeager breaking the speed of sound.

(c) 2012 AFP

Citation: Austrian daredevil to make new space jump bid Sunday (Update) (2012, October 14) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-10-austrian-daredevil-space.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.