

BUCKYBALL SGR A* CHALLENGE

A Brief History in Crazy

Genesis - Birth of the Buckyballers:

Back in the late 20th Century, when internal combustion engines were reaching their peak, two men conceived of an idea to both celebrate the Interstate highway (A sort of, tarmac based route designed to link two cities together across long distances) and protest against strict speed limits being imposed at the time.

This was to become known as the 'Cannonball Baker Sea-To-Shining-Sea Memorial Trophy Dash'. More widely referred to as simply "The Cannonball Run" it quickly gained popularity as an event for vehicle enthusiasts across the world and became a tradition that stuck around well into the 21st Century and beyond.

Fast forward a Millennium, into the 32nd Century.

The "Buckyball" Braben Star-to-Shining-Star Memorial Trophy Dash, widely known simply as The Buckyball Run, was an unofficial, unsanctioned spaceship race from Xiaoguan Hub in Magec to the Vonarburg Co-Operative in the Wyrd system, intended both as a celebration of the Federation Interstellar Star Route System and a protest against strict traffic laws coming into effect at the time, and an homage to the 1970's created 'Cannonball Run'.

As it was found out, the newly imposed 9.8c relativistic limit imposed by the Federation Maximum Velocity Law (imposed as an energy conservation measure) was actually slower than the quickest average velocities of point-to-point travels of Commander Ian Buchanan "Buckyball" Braben (no relation) in the first half of the 32nd century. In 3102, Braben flew the route in a Cowell-MgRath model 57 Sidewinder, averaging greater than 12.5c, setting a 32 minute record that stood for nearly 140 years.

Another motivation was the fun involved...

Buckyball Runs and the build up to Sgr A*:

3300 (Precise date unknown): Discussions began amongst several Pilots Federation Commanders on how to push their ships to the limits. Not in terms of combat prowess, or even Cargo Capacity. But in terms of speed.

As a result, nearly 200 years after the initial run, the first 'official' Buckyball Run was hosted by CMDR ElectricZ, with a competitive race from Magec to Wyrd. A turnout of 14 Pilots Federation Commanders, it turned out to be a surprisingly popular event. With the overall winning time belonging to a CMDR Hardware.

It was all in good fun and the seed had been sown. People were itching to see what else could be done.

25th August 3300: Buckyball Run 2 came to a close. This time a scramble race between 6 systems. Eranin, Ross 1015, LHS 417, Nan Ta-Khian, Magec and Dahan. Of the 15 pilots to post a time, the winner this time was once again CMDR Hardware.

7th September 3300: More pilots were joining the fun and Buckyball Run 3 hosted 19 pilots in a checkpoint race starting at Asellus Prime and asking Commanders to hit Aulin, BD+47 2112, Dahan, Eranin, I Bootis, LHS 3006, Morgor and Styx. This totalled 9 systems and permitted CMDR Mutant to take the top spot.

21st September 3300: Buckyball Run 4 was another checkpoint race between only 5 systems this time. Eranin, LP 98-132, TBD 1, TBD 2 and I Bootis were once again filled with fast moving Commanders all hoping to be the fastest of the 11 Pilots competing. With 5 DNFs however it proved to be a difficult challenge but a CMDR Fox Two grabbed the spot of overall winner in the Solo Class, while CMDR Katzenfalconburger took the Unlimited Class top spot and CMDR Freebird took first place in the Sidewinder Class.

11th October 3300: Buckyball Run 5 was a milestone for the club. Hosting an impressive 22 Pilots in the Open Class and 14 in the Solo Class in a race from Coelrind to XI Wangkala. It was also the first event to fully show the effects of appropriate module selection in vessels, with the majority of competitors favouring 'D-Class' modules for their lightness.

The winners this time were CMDR Henry Dorset and CMDR Reload who tied for first place in the Open Class, with CMDR Ghostbuster winning in the Solo Class

26th January 3301: There was yet another milestone event for the Buckyball Racers Club with Buckyball Run 6 becoming an immensely popular event that required 4 different classes of race.

A checkpoint race that gave the citizens of STF 1447, LP 131-66, Wolf 359 and Agartha a glimpse into the speed and skill many of the CMDRs had built up over

the events, and the lack thereof and inevitable destruction of the 13 DNFs.

Open Unlimited Class Winner: CMDR Alot (52 Times recorded)

Solo Unlimited Class Winner: CMDR Nomake Wan (13 times recorded)

Open Sidewinder Class Winner: CMDR Gurlagg (21 times recorded)

Solo Sidewinder Class Winner: CMDR MostlyEvilKiwi (2 times recorded)

12th April 3301: No Chianga, Cate, Chaga, Chaona, K'Uanele, Shesmu and Woloniugo were the (un)fortunate spectators to the Buckyball Run 7 Checkpoint Race. With 3 DNFs the winners this time were:

Open Unlimited: CMDR Alot (25 times posted)

Solo Unlimited: CMDR Nomake Wan (5 times posted)

Open Sidewinder: CMDR Alot (15 times posted)

Solo Sidewinder: CMDR ElectricZ (2 times posted)

Although murmurings of a long range endurance challenge had been heard throughout the other 6 runs, BR7 is widely regarded as the place and time such discussions reached their peak. The times CMDR Alot recorded and earned his two victories with were made all the more impressive by the fact he had in fact completed his own personal challenge on the 20th March 3301, a mere week before the start of BR7.

A gauntlet had been thrown down for Buckyballers to race from Sol to Sagittarius A* (The Supermassive Black Hole at the centre of our Galaxy), as fast as possible, with a time to beat of 13 hours. As a result...

The Buckyball Run A*:

Sun 19th Apr 3301: Saw the announcement and inevitable beginning of the longest Buckyball challenge to date. Longest, in every sense of the word. This challenge took racers further than they had to before, it took longer than any previous challenge to complete and, as a result, it stood for longer before the doors were eventually closed and the prizes handed out.

While certain rules had been applied to previous runs, it went without saying that this challenge was great enough on its own, so ElectricZ posted a very short list of rules. Amongst the usual requirements for submitting evidence and stating their intents to race, CMDRs had one simple line to follow:

Start in either Lomas Orbital in the Wolf 359 system, or Galileo in Sol, and plot a course from there to Sagittarius A* as quickly as possible.

The reasoning for the dual start point was that the Sol system was, and remains to this day, permit locked to ranking members of the Federation. Therefore not all CMDRs had access to Galileo without appropriately bootlicking their way up Federal ranks and so, in the all inclusive spirit of Buckyball Racing, a secondary start point was located and agreed upon in order to allow full accessibility to all prospective CMDRs.

As with other Buckyball Runs, the timer doesn't stop if you do either. Meaning, in order to post a competitive time, Commanders had to complete the 26,000Ly trip in one sitting. Not that this stopped most of them.

21st of July 3301: Saw the eventual close of the Buckyball Run A* race and since there was only one class in this event the end result was CMDR Alot claiming the top spot once again, with an impressive time of 8 hours 43 minutes and 43 seconds, shaving nearly 5 hours from his initial challenge. But the madness didn't end there.

Many pilots, rather than take the favoured Asp Explorer or Anaconda for their jump ranges, took it upon themselves to use 'less than ideal ships' for the trip. 21 different vessels were taken from civilised space to the centre of the Galaxy including Type-9s, Haulers and Orcas.

Clearly this was a challenge that suited the Buckyball Racers *just fine*.

Of course, it was one thing to give people roughly two months within which to post their best times. But the beauty of Buckyball Racing has always been in the art of fine tuning. With small runs, this was easily done by heading out again and perfecting the Supercruise dropouts or the angle of approach. But a 26,000Ly trip required more than just a few corrections here and there. To set a good time, you had to be able to outfit your ship right. To set a great time, you had to practice the art of fuel scooping and coincide the filling of your fuel tank with the timing of starting your FSD charge to jump to the next system.

To set a **record** time, you had to combine both of these, plan your route ahead of time and be able to complete each jump for the full 26,000Ly without making a mistake, without stopping and most importantly, without losing concentration for even a moment.

But if there was to be a winner declared for the Buckyball Run A*, the doors had to be closed. So how does one go about fine tuning in a challenge that has been declared closed?

Well... By opening it up indefinitely under a slightly different name of course.

Creation of the Buckyball Sgr A* Challenge:

This wasn't the end of it for many Commanders by a long shot. They had an itch, it had been scratched, but it only served to give them a bigger itch. On that very same day, CMDR Samwell Drakhyr took the leaderboard and made it a Global Challenge to every Pilots Federation Commander in the Galaxy.

It was a challenge that was to stand as long as the Galaxy itself, and was destined to change and evolve as new technologies became accessible and software upgrades were implemented. But the core of it remained solid.

Sol/Wolf 359 to Sgr A*. Do it, and do it fast.

Major updates:

1.0 (game released) - 16/12/3300

1.1 (Community Goals) - 10/02/3301 (also included extension of route plotting to 1000 LY)

1.2 (Wings) - 10/03/3301

1.3 (Powerplay) - 05/06/3301

1.4 (CQC) - 06/10/3301

2.0 (Horizons) - 15/12/3302

2.1 (The Engineers) - 26/05/3302

2.2 (The Guardians) - 25/10/3302 (also added white dwarf / neutron star boosts and route plotter optimisation; changed system arrival point to always be in line with origin)

2.3 (The Commanders) - 11/04/3303 (fixed slow witchspace times when using Horizons)