

A Lot More Than Hot Air

On Wednesday, Jan. 28, the *Breitling Orbiter II* (above) took off from Château d'Oex in the Swiss Alps — the latest attempt in the challenge to circumnavigate the globe nonstop in a hot-air balloon. The crew, Switzerland's Bertrand Piccard, Belgium's Vim Verstraeten and England's Andy Elson, has already overcome several accidents and weather delays since its original launch date in early January. They took off after lighting the burners with a former Olympic torch from the Olympic museum in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Another balloon team, the *Virgin Global Challenger*, was, at press time, scheduled to take off from Morocco the weekend of Jan. 31. Last November, Anheuser-Busch announced that it will award \$500,000 to the first successful team, and a further \$500,000 to a charity chosen by that team. "The quest to fly around the world is one of aviation's last great challenges remaining," said Tony Ponturo, vice president of Anheuser-Busch.

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