

2179 **PG fatality** 🇨🇺 **Fabián Batista Hidalgo, 19**
 🇨🇺 **December 27, 2022** Boniato, Santiago de Cuba, CUBA

Collapse. Fabian Batista Hidalgo had just turned 19. As he launched from a slope above the Port of Boniato, the sail that supported him collapsed, turned violently back toward the mountainside and slammed him against the takeoff area, killing him. Members of the *Santiago Flight Club* at the scene blamed him for overusing his brakes, which caused the sail to collapse. His body was recovered by the city's fire brigade. According to experts and the *National Statistics Center of the United States*, the possibility of dying while paragliding is quite high when compared to other sports such as boxing, which includes exchanges of strong blows, or even skydiving. Takeoff and landing are moments of special danger for paragliders and the vast majority of deaths or serious injuries are related to pilot errors or collapses during these moments.



Most paragliding deaths follow a collapse and the subsequent loss of control. A collapse is not a stall or structural failure. It is unique to the parachute, a backpackable, very low performance aircraft designed to hopefully save one's life in an aerial emergency. The evolution of the aerodynamic skydiving parachute brought higher performance with infrequent incidents of collapse. But collapse remains the indisputable Achilles Heel of the paraglider, despite the flood of industry hype to the contrary. Enthusiasts frequently insist that novice errors such as Fabian's overuse of brakes could have been prevented with adequate training, even to the absurdity of claiming that *all* paragliding accidents are a result of pilot error.

But the majority of paragliding deaths actually happen to experienced operators when their sails collapse in turbulence below 100 meters, where emergency parachutes have little time to open. In paragliding, altitude is the great equalizer. While the expert is much better at surviving in turbulence than the novice, once one enters the Paragliding Dead Mans Curve during take off, ridge soaring or landing, experience becomes of little consequence in the event of collapse.

🇨🇺 PHOTO 1590 *Cuba Noticias 360*

1590 CUBA: Photo of Fabián Batista Hidalgo by RRSS; Leon, Hugo, "Muere en accidente joven piloto cubano de parapente / **Young Cuban paragliding pilot dies in accident**," *Cuba Noticias 360*, 28 Dec 2022,
 <<https://www.cubanoticias360.com/muere-en-accidente-joven-piloto-cubano-de-parapente/>>