

**Title: Junior (and Senior) Pilots Enjoy a Wonderful Week at Historic Harris Hill**



The combined Junior Camp/Contest and Region 3 Contest were held at Harris Hill, Elmira, NY July 1-8, 2017. There were ten entrants and two guests in the Junior Contest flying single seat gliders, including US Junior Team members, Noah Reitter, Daniel Sazhin, and JP Stewart. Twelve other enthusiastic Juniors attended the Junior Camp where they received cross country instruction in two seat gliders.

Fourteen pilots plus one guest flew in the Region 3 Sports Class Contest, for a total of 39 pilots (plus six instructor pilots).

The Junior Camp/ Contest was organized by the SSA Youth/Junior Committee in cooperation with the Harris Hill Soaring Corporation. The event was largely funded by the SSA and the Rick Walters Scholarship Fund, thus minimizing the required contribution from each Junior pilot.

Two seater cross country instruction was provided in four ASK-21's and two Duo Discuses under the leadership of Chief Instructor, Hank Nixon. Two seat mentor pilots included Karl Striedieck, Dave Welles, Roy McMaster, Sean Murphy and Andy Brayer. The camp routine was early glider

assembly, Pilot's Meeting, Ground School session, grid and fly with breakfast and lunch squeezed in wherever possible.

Each day, the two seaters were gridded first and acted as sniffers for the racing classes. Their tasks for each day were set short enough to get in two flights before the end of the day, but long enough to provide cross country training and experience. A typical area task took the two-seat ships from the start cylinder to a 15 mile radius turn area over Hammondsport, followed by a 4 mile radius steering turn area over Caton and back to the finish cylinder, providing a nominal distance of 57 mi and a max/min of 99/23mi. This approach worked well and enabled the camp attendees to get several cross country instruction flights throughout the week.



Andy Brayer instructing!



Hank Nixon giving thermal entry instruction!

A major factor for a good contest is the weather.. Luckily, we had the best weather week of the summer getting five contest days for Region 3 and three contest days for the Junior Contest. Often heard during the week was Kai Gertsen's (KI) famous comment "Gonna be good!". Our weatherman, Phil Chidekel, who competed in the Junior Contest in an ASW-15, is a meteorology major at Penn State University and is also a mentee of Richard Kellerman. He did a superb job of forecasting and presenting the weather, which was not always easy!

### **Practice Day, Saturday, July 1**

It was a hot humid day with rain storms in the area. Check rides were the extent of the flying but a hearty social hour was enjoyed by all as the juniors made introductions around the evening camp fire.



A beautiful evening welcomes pilots to the Hill

### **Day 1 Region 3 and Practice Day 2 for Juniors, Sunday, July 2:**

A promising start to the day progressed to overdevelopment and rain showers, causing some difficulties for the contestants.

Region 3 pilots were assigned a two hour turn area task with a nominal distance of 98 miles to Avoca (15 mi) and Mansfield Bridge (15 mi). Two pilots finished (John Seymour and Bill Hanson) and a number of pilots visited the local Corning-Painted Post airport.

The Junior pilots were assigned a practice turn area task of 56 mi nominal. Ryan McMaster was the only finisher with a speed of 30.6mph and a distance of 61 mi. A number of Junior pilots also ended up at Corning-Painted Post. Joe Costa, the airport manager, was quite pleased that the flock of sailplanes visiting his airport did not claim any runway lights as has happened in the past!

The Junior two-seater gliders had a successful day with twelve completed xc instruction flights. Seven Junior pilots had their first cross country flight ever.



A rare sight in US contests – a full grid.

### **Day 2 Region 3 and Day 1 Junior Contest, Monday, July 3:**

A cold front passage gave us cooler drier air with bases 6000-6500 feet (about 4500 feet agl) and some horizontal spreadout. The Region 3 task was a two hour TAT with a nominal distance of 118 mi to Penn Yan (12 mi), Hornell (20 mi) and Caton (3mi). Caton was used throughout the contest as a steering turn to keep finishers clear of the Elmira Airport Class D airspace just to the NE of Harris Hill. John Seymour (SM) finished first once again with a handicapped speed of 46.5mph and a raw distance of 118.8mi.

The Juniors were assigned a two hour TAT with a nominal distance of 57 mi to Hammondsport (15 mi) and Caton (3 mi). US Junior Team member, Noah Reitter, won the day with a handicapped speed of 39.8 mph, and our weatherman, Phil Chidekel was second in his ASW 15 at 38.1 mph. All but one of the Junior pilots finished the task, with five celebrating their first ever contest finish!

Of note, all three members of the US Junior team (Noah Reitter, Daniel Sazhin and JP Stewart) flew the task twice! This was an excellent practice day for their approaching trip to Lithuania for the Junior World Gliding Championships.



The US Junior Soaring Team



Harris Hill Duo ready to go!



Karl Striedieck and Liam Kent preparing to launch.

The two seater fleet had another successful day with ten flights and lots of grins on the Junior cross country students.

#### **Day 3 Region 3 and Day 2 Junior Contest, Tuesday, July 4:**

We had an ideal upstate NY summer day with cloud base near 6500 feet and light northerly winds. The Region 3 task was a three hour Assigned MAT with assigned turnpoints Monterey, Dansville, Cameron, Elkland Bridge and Mansfield Bridge. Clay Monroe (24) came home in first place with a flight of 162.7mi and a handicapped speed of 49.5mph. John Seymour (SM) finished second with a flight of 189.9mi. The day was not without difficulties with some cycling of the lift and many dishonest clouds.

The Juniors had a great day with Team USA (Daniel Sazhin (779), JP Stewart (XZ - Guest), Noah Reitter (XC)) taking the top three spots, finishing close together, all with raw distances and speeds close to 150mi and 57mph.

The two seater fleet made great use of the day as well, going through the instructor-student rotation again. Throughout the week, each Junior student flew with several mentors and had the opportunity to fly in a Duo Discus.

This wonderful soaring day and the Fourth of July were appropriately celebrated with one of the famous Harris Hill dinner-picnics at the Youth Camp complete with musical entertainment by Tom Olson and David Hart (DG), plus fireworks by Andy Brayer!

#### **Day 4 Region 3 and Day 3 Junior Contest, Wednesday July 5:**

The weather looked a bit questionable early in the day, with high pressure moving east and a SE flow. The Juniors were assigned a two hour TAT to Monterey, Van Etten and Millerton for a

nominal distance of 69.7 mi. It was quite a tricky day: some areas featured 5 knot thermals to 6500 feet, while in other areas, only dead air, lying clouds and struggles below 4000 feet were to be found. Despite the difficult conditions, all the Junior pilots completed the task, with Daniel and Noah team flying to first and second (95 mi @ 45 mph). Their teammate, JP had to go back to work for a few days and missed the fun. The two seater bus class also had a good day.

Region 3 was assigned a two hour TAT to Monterey, Richford and Millerton with a nominal distance of 108.1 mi. Launching second, the Region 3 pilots had a bit of a struggle, resulting in several landouts, but Andrew Ainslie (VW) won the day with a raw distance of 119 mi and a handicapped speed of 43.3 mph. John Seymour (SM) finished second retaining first place overall.

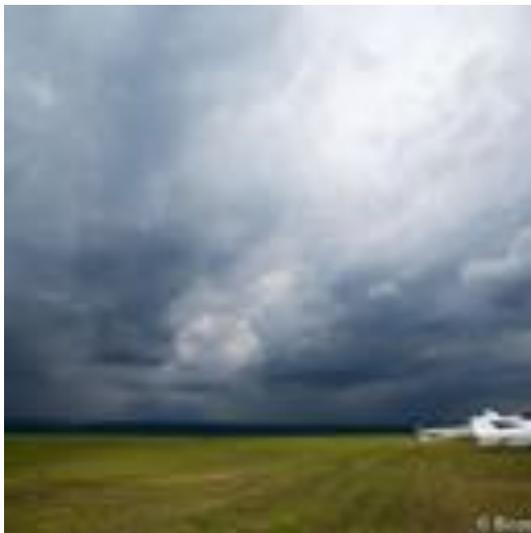
At the Thursday morning pilots meeting, our weatherman, Punxsutawney Phil, summarized the situation quite succinctly: "It's looking pretty crappy." The day was officially canceled at 1100.

The big news of the day, however, was provided by the Juniors. It is well known that young pilots with time on their hands can be very creative. It seems this tendency is enhanced at Harris Hill where in the past, trailers with the gliders inside have been filled with plastic spoons or wadded up navigation charts. Another incident involved the substitution of a damaged wing in place of a good wing in Heinz Weissenbuehler's trailer.

This year, the Juniors really raised the bar. Morning arrivals at Harris Hill found John Bird's Russia (AAN) fully assembled, taped, and with completed CAC inside the Harris Hill Flight Center.



Friday brought a forecast of a line of strong storms arriving early afternoon. The day was canceled at 1100, but several pilots (including the CD in the Duo!) flew locally before the black and rain arrived at 1330. In the evening, everyone enjoyed a taco party put on by Heinz Weissenbuehler and Karin Schlosser at their home located at the brow of Harris Hill.



Time to land and put the gliders away!

**Day 5 Region 3, Saturday July 8:**

At the pilots meeting, Phil reported a cold front still to our west with an associated squall line forecast to move through about noon. Good soaring conditions were forecast behind the front. CD, Tim Welles, delayed gridding to 1300.

At noon, the sky was black and Harris Hill was getting a downpour with standing water on the runway. The CD delayed grid time to 1330.

Then sure enough, cumulus streets developed, and the ridge began working with a NW wind! The fleet gridded and the launch started at 1315. Region 3 was assigned a two hour TAT to Jolamtra, Mansfield Bridge, Cameron and Caton with a nominal distance of 118.9mi. The task opened at 1340. Climbs averaged 3-4k knots with some as high as 6 knots, although some blue holes and difficulties were reported down low. Andrew Ainslie(VW) had a great day flying 128.6mi raw and 52.6mph handicapped to win, while Rob Tarnoczy (RAS) was second in his ASW-19.

The Junior task was canceled due to the late launch and poor conditions on part of their route, but they had a fun day playing on the Harris Hill ridge along with the two seater bus class. This was a first time for many of the Juniors to experience a real ridge and they provided a good show for the spectators at the lookout at the brow of Harris Hill.

After five contest days for Region 3, John Seymour (SM) took first place overall, followed by Bill Hanson(WH) in second and Andrew Ainslie (VW) in third.

The Junior Camp-Contest was a great success! Daniel Sazhin (779), Noah Reitter (XC) and Phil Chidekel (CT) were the top three placers in the Junior Contest. Though JP had to miss a contest day for work, this event provided five days of team practice for Daniel, Noah and JP before their trip to the Junior Worlds in Lithuania in early August.

Phil Chidekel earned the "Rookie of the Year" award for the highest placing by a pilot new to competition, and the "Rookie Weatherman of the Year" award for his outstanding work analyzing, forecasting and reporting the weather for the contest.

*Personal Impressions – Phil Chidekel*



*When I was 15, I earned my Silver Badge in Brandywine Soaring Association's 1-26—an accomplishment that I am proud of to this day. However, after my pin came in the mail, it occurred to me that both my demographics and interests alienated me within my club. I was already the youngest member, and no one else within the non-glider-owning contingent shared my enthusiasm for cross-country flying—regardless of age. A group of individuals that contained my passion was already a dream, let alone a like-minded group of juniors.*

*Five years later, I found myself flying in a contest with a group of young, enthusiastic people that would exclusively talk about soaring. Whoa.*

*The Junior Camp at Harris Hill was a resounding success on a number of levels. In terms of the actual flying, it offered something for everyone. For me, it was a friendly introduction to the format and pace of contest flying, as well as an opportunity to test my decision-making against the foremost junior pilots in the United States. For those just beginning their adventures in cross-country soaring, it was the chance to learn from some of the most experienced pilots in the United States. At the end of a contest day, everyone had something valuable to discuss, and the entire group of juniors—regardless of skill or experience—was excited to listen.*

*My most memorable flight occurred on the first contest day. Unforgiving weather was dealt, and I watched the day develop with frustration as I tried to start the 2-hour TAT. I couldn't climb! None of the gaggles within the start cylinder seemed to be going up, and after scratching as high as I could, I pointed my nose into the 14-knot headwind and committed to the first cloud on course. It worked! I decided to continue directly into the wind, thinking that a street ought to form. It did, and on my way into the first turn, the ASW-15 was out-running Discuses and LS-4s. I bumped along as far as I could into the sector, and when my line ended, I decided to turn around and hit the steering turn. Although I underestimated the awesomeness of the tailwind/cloud street combination and finished under time, I flew effectively and competitively.*

Many thanks are due to the folks who made the Junior Camp-Contest a successful reality: JP Stewart as the organizer, Competition Director Tim Welles, Chief Instructor Hank Nixon, and two seater instructors Roy McMaster, Dave Welles, Karl Striedieck, Sean Murphy and Andy Brayer. US Team member Sean Fidler (7T) also contributed by flying several days coaching the Junior Team members. The combined instructing and contest flying experience of the mentor group was over 200 years!

The Harris Hill Juniors were indispensable helping with gridding, launching and sailplane recovery. Many also got a two seater flight during the week. Thanks go out to them, as well as the tow pilots and contest management.



Harris Hill Junior Launch Team

The SSA sponsored video taping of the Junior activities and flying which was professionally managed by Chris Schrader. We cannot wait to see the results which will be used to prepare a publicity presentation to further the development of Junior Soaring in the United States.

***Are you under 26 and think you might want to join us next time?***

***Visit <http://juniors.ssa.org/> and register for the contest info mailing list.***



***A few notes from the contest manager and SSA Youth/Junior Committee Chair – JP Stewart***

*This event is a landmark in the development of junior soaring in the US. Having only started the year before with 8 pilots, it has more than doubled in one year to 24 pilots with juniors traveling from Alaska, California, and even Canada to participate and is on a trajectory to match the participation and quality of similar events held in some of the most successful soaring countries within the next few years.*

*"This has been one of the best weeks in a long long time and thank you all for being a part of it."  
– a camp participant in a message to the contest chat*

*The success of both, the 2016 and 2017 Junior Camp-Contest would not have been possible without the financial support of the SSA and the Rick Walters (3R) Junior Scholarship Fund. Both of these organizations recognize the importance of the development of Junior Soaring to the future of this sport and set an amazing precedent by making this contest affordable to anyone who wanted to be there. In addition to financial contributions, it took a village of people who donated their time and talent to the cause. They were rewarded with the experience of seeing a newfound sense of wonder from the junior's many firsts: first XC flights, first contest task finishes, first landouts, etc.*

*If you'd like to help with this event or other junior development activities, please visit:  
<http://juniors.ssa.org/home/how-to-help/>*

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