

2007 SRA Pilot Opinion Poll Results

November 14, 2007 9:22 PM

ALL text responses (no suppression) are listed below. The View and suppress text responses for question: selector on the author page may be used to suppress any inappropriate text responses so that offensive language or direct references can be eliminated from a published report. Current suppressed text is presented in red.

Answers to value response questions.

No responsive questions of this type were found.

Answers to short responsive questions.

No responsive questions of this type were found.

Answers to medium responsive questions.

No responsive questions of this type were found.

Answers to long responsive questions.

12.1: Are there any other issues that you would like the SSA Rules Committee to address, any rules-related problems you observed this year, or any questions that you would like to see included on future SRA polls?

1. Eliminate the max gross wgt limitation for sports class regionals. Most if not all 2 place motor gliders with 2 pilots are over the limit, which discourages new participants. 2. Eliminate the requirement to have a Silver Badge for Sports regionals. The old requirement to have any badge leg is sufficient. I personally know of several very qualified pilots who wanted to compete and couldnt. In parts of the country that are sparsely populated the observers, etc are hard to come by. Maybe allow a sign off by a CFIG or ranked pilot to suffice. I would be happy to discuss this at length another time. The skill or endurance for any leg should be sufficient to compete in regionals.

1. I feel that in no-water FAI contests that the gliders should be handicaped based upon weight. In the absence of scales, this could easily be done by the pilot showing the official W/B empty weight with installed instruments + pilot weight (Scale at check-in). Non removable ballast would not be permitted. Only tail water for CG would be permitted. 2. It has become the norm for the CD to defer task assignment until grid time. This gives an unfair advantage to the pilots at the end of the grid and rushes the first few pilots. This is a safety issue. At Fredericksberg, it was refreshing to have 2or3 tasks called at the pilots meeting. Planning could be done and we could relax before grid. The CD could modify a task shorter if the day did not develop. If, in rare instances a completely new task must be called. I recommend that the first launch not begin for 30-40 minutes. For the first pilot, it takes about 10 minutes to get settled into the cockpit, do the pretakeoff checklist and program the computer. This leaves no time for a last pee and to study a map and plot a course. 3. And NEVER change a task in the air unless absolutely necessary for safety or the rare time unforecast wx occurs. This is dangerous as everyone is reprogramming their computers. I had an 18 ft(GPS confirmed)near miss during one of these at nationals. A task should not be changed just so everyone can make it home. Even the free-for-all MAT should be avoided as you have gliders everywhere. 4. Re: Start Cylinder exit point. The con says that one could exit the rear of the cylinder and use the prestart gaggle at the other side. This is elimintated if the pilot is scored only from his last exit from the side or the top or state that the pilot can only exit in the perpendicular hemicircle to the course. Also, it is the CDs responsibility to set a start cylinder that does not put the glider so far away from the field as to invite a landout risk before the start. i.e. Start cylinders

are opposite the course line from the airport or at least horizontal. 5. Definitely do not allow motors in the FAI 15 and Std classes. 18m, Sports, and open are now allowed to have motors. Let the pilots who want motors choose those classes. We need at least two pure glider classes. I have flown both and I opted not for an engine as I feel that it is a disadvantage due to the weight and decision height for land out must be higher thus reducing the search radius. Why change a rule so that a few people who can afford the extra \$30k-50k have an advantage. Had I had a motor at Parowan, I would have landed out twice. As it was, I scratched and made it back.

1. Motorized sailplanes should not be allowed in any National or Regional competition. They need their own class. In a no water contest they have a significant wing loading advantage. In addition, flying into marginal or unlandable terrain seems to be the norm rather than the exception resulting in unfair competition. 2, Maximum distance points should be increased to 800 for all contests.

10 day contests are too long -- nats need to be shortened to 7 days. Similarly, regionals should be no more than 5 days. Rules that are padding to the FAA rules need to come out. In particular, the 500 ft altitude ceiling padding and the time to sunset padding should be eliminated.

ADD A CLUB CLASS!!!! THIS WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE VERY POPULAR!!!

Add mandatory finish heights. No more worm-burner finishes. Gave CD discretion to expand the safety finish radius in the interest of safety, and establish a preference for the CD or designee to provide in-flight advisories on weather conditions whenever hazardous weather is in the contest area.

All efforts should be taken to align the US rules with the rules that will be flown in International Competitions that we are sending our pilots to. The Open Class gross weight must align with the JAR/FAI/OSTIV limit of 850KG.

At the Sports class Nationals this year a safety finish was called. An unforeseen and illegal result ensued, although in the name of safety it non the less gave several pilots an unfair advantage. CCSC ground issued weather reports of the conditions in various areas of the airport, clear hear, severe there, and some contestants in the air also, in the name of safety, gave reports of conditions where they were. This allowed still flying pilots to vector their return.

Concerning 2.2. A better system of selecting pilots for team flying is needed. Pilots, no matter how good they are, that cannot work within a team environment and who maintain a more individualist approach to team flying, are not in our best interest as observed from some of the scores received over the years. We need a way of assessing pilots who function well as a cooperative team. Our teams need a way to practice and compete together. One idea that might work would be to have a team trial like any national or regional race, but where the competitors are teams not individuals and the winning team is then selected to go to the Worlds. When our teams start winning, things like sponsorships and endorsements may follow thereby removing the need for world team to have to raise money to compete in these events. Winners of contests do often get sponsored.

Consider lowering the max wing loading (reducing, but not eliminating, water ballast) for Standard Class competitions. We dont need to be flying so heavy. It leads to excessive launch risks/hazards.

Consideration should be given to consider the affect of small-fuselage models in the racing classes. A fuselage gliders have a small, but significant performance advantage which discourages normal size pilots from participating. In addition, a minimum empty weight should be encouraged to help assure minimum crash-worthiness.

Dont foist judgment calls on the CDs for Handicaps. Have explicit measures as now if things must change. How can you measure profiling sanding etc as to differences to original condition? Stop being nit picky.

Dont make rules that you cannot enforce. The prohibition on team flying is a joke, as is the ban on cell-phone weather. You might as well give in, and maybe some teams will develop to the World competition level. You might even consider awarding trophies to pre-declared teams at each of the

events to encourage that development. In the OLC flying each weekend I have observed that many, if not most, truly enjoy the camaraderie of team flying. Make it legal for them in regionals and nationals. By the way, in case you are wondering, I'm hopelessly reclusive in my cross-country soaring and racing habits. For me, cross-country is a highly personal challenge. Different strokes for different folks!

ELTs: With the changes in usability of the 123.3 ELTs in 02/09 and considering the problem with installation (where, installation requirements, size, weight of new 406 etc) of these and the newer 406 elts and the less than wonderful overall reliability as location device (Steve Fossett as just one of many examples) will this issue be re-addressed so that it is a voluntary but recommended piece of equipment and opening it up to Personal Location devices?

Eliminate as many rules as possible to make it easier for pilots to understand what is going on.

For rolling circle finish gates the issue of penalties for rolling finish should be revisited ie as apposed to using the time of the rolling stop. A rational approach would be to finish the pilots contest flight when the pilot crosses the finish cylinder and apply a penalty in proportion to the crime, much as missing a turn or start cylinder. The penalty would be proportional to the degree of the low finish. The pilot can then concentrate on making the landing as SAFELY as possible, as apposed to making the landing as FAST as possible. For finish lines there is no need to change the rolling finish "penalty"

I believe we need a sub class in our Sports Class: Club Class. Within the club class, allow only the types of gliders as allowed in European, and other locales: Club Class gliders. Pilots for the U.S. Team would be picked from the U.S. Club Class. Allow the Sports Class and Club Class to fly at regionals as well as the Nationals. I don't care how much handicapping there is, it just isn't a fair race (I know, it's not a fair world to start with...) when Joe Fast shows up with an ASGeethismuthaissfastitsinvisible-29, Doug Afterburner comes with his Ventus 2csquaredbegonesofastyounever sawme, and Tommy Thermaltite has a new LS-22, with wires, red and blue, connected to his brain. He's having to use the backup wires because he forgot his batteries for the Blue Tooth connection. And while these guys are zipping along near Mach speeds, needing only one thermal to go 500 miles at over 100 miles per hour in the southeast flatlands, I'm having to stop at every third mobile home, hoping the six or seven junked cars in the front yard will kick off a thermal. Sometimes, I have to wait for the old dog to crawl out from under the porch that is mostly collapsed from the lineup of old washers and refrigerators and run around barking and chasing his tail to kick up a thermal. And yes, I know the pilots skill has a tiny bit of involvement here, but I want to know that I'm staying on the bottom of the score sheet because of the above-named pilots and not the ships they're driving. And, don't ever take my ship off of the Club Class roster of approved ships (I'm assuming it is on the list.) Ray Lovinggood LS1-d, W8

I can't think of any more questions worth adding to the poll.

I think that we should consider going a little further with the 600 point max distance rule and instead of having a point max, we should use a slowest finisher rule. In other words, take the lowest finisher score times the percent of distance of task completion for a landout score ie if pilot A is the last one back and scores 85% of the winners score for 850 points and pilot B lands out after completing all of the turnpoints in a 100 mile task and lands 5 miles from the airport, he should receive 95% of 850 points or 807 points. I applaud the fact that the rules committee has gone as far as they have but we still need to go a little further and not penalize so severely the landout. Thanks

I think the issue of Team Flying needs more discussion than is provided here. I believe Team Flying offers a clear advantage and we must start practicing Team Flying in the US to compete more effectively at the International Level.

I would like the RC to consider making sports class handicaps reflect even wingloading, rather than the arbitrary manufacturers empty weight + 250 lbs. The current setting of handicaps puts lighter ships at a disadvantage. If we want fair racing, and for Sports and Club classes to show off pilot skills, we should eliminate ANY and EVERY disadvantage. Obviously, we do not want people putting

lead in their ships wings. BUT, we can pick an arbitrary wingloading that fits within the range of competitors ships (it was done at 9 lbs/sqft for Std class for years), and allow that as the basis for allowable contest weight. If you cant make it up to the defined wing loading, then you should get a handicap adjustment to reflect your lighter wingloading. Also, linked in with my main suggestion, I would like to see handicap adjustments for gliders flying at lighter than max allowable handicapped weights.

It has been my personal observation that the current system is working as well as can be hoped for, good job! Comments: (1) I would like to see the top three places in each valid regional class receive medallions regardless of pilot count, it seems appropriate as most all other sports do honor the effort in this way. Yes, this comes from my personal experience (and many others) by placing 3rd in the 15m class at a 2006 regional that had #11 pilots... 15m R-9 in Parowan had #15 pilots... no medal was given to 3rd per the existing rules. If it would require all pilots to pay an additional \$5.00 per person to pay for the additional medals, I'm sure they would do so. (2) I have found pilots participation in contests is greatly increased when a comprehensive web site is provided well in advance. A web site reflecting all the important aspects including and especially an active pilots list as people sign up creates interest and urgency and therefore greater participation. If you review all contests (Regional & National) in the last few years I think you find a strong correlation between low pilot count in contests that either didn't have a web site or did so within only a short time before the contest began vs. a much higher participation in contest that do provide a good web site well in advance. I would like to see it mandatory for the organizers to provide an active and comprehensive web site within a minimum of 120 days in advance of the contest start date. In this day and age this should not be difficult or too costly.

Just a couple of comments related to the above: - 7.0 Handicap Adjustments: I think anything which requires fabrication or permanent structural modification should result in a handicap review/adjustment. As an example, gap sealing or wing sanding doesnt count as a structural modification nor does a taped on fairing. Modified wing/fuselage juncture is a structural modification. - 10.0 Inflight Weather: If we formally sanction something, it becomes a pre-requisite to be competitive. Lets not take this lightly. I think the prohibition can be easily dealt with under the existing sportsmanship rules but probably deserves some clarification in the next guide to the rules.

Look at modifying the way the 1-mile/500ft finish is scored to eliminate the all or nothing penalty for finishing 1 foot low. Pilot does not have good altimeter indications of his actual finish altitude in real time. See long discussion on rec.aviation.soaring in this subject.

Make Winscore a secure program. Have penalties printed out seperately and always show the penalty and action taken. The penalties become official once scores have become official, giving all competitors time to protest over said penalty. Stop posting flight logs on the SSA webpage. If someone wants the world to see his flight, then he can post it on the OLC. Remember some of us have experimental certificates, and the FAA is watching.....ya, I know, tell the scorer you dont want your IGC file posted, maybe you should tell him that, and experience the ka boom.

Motor gliders should not be able to end their flight by starting their engine

Motorized sailplanes should be allowed to participate in any National contest as long as the motor cannot be started in flight. Although it may be stupid to do so, having an in flight startable motor may encourage pilots to venture into situations that a non motorized glider pilot would not attempt. That may give a competitive advantage. I do not object to a motor being used for self retrieve after the pilot has landed. Perhaps motor doors could be taped closed with an official check at launch time. Any evidence of in flight motor start should result in loss of all contest points.

NO More Finish Lines at any contest, mandatory circle (Minimum 2 mile) finishes. I really dont care if the CD likes it or not. No exceptions, and CD will not have any discretion on this issue. Need a New Rule to limit change direction between turnpoints at no greater than 110 degrees. This will provide better separation of incoming and outgoing gliders at turnpoints.

Nationals should be changed 7 days, Sunday through Saturday, as is done in the UK. The current 10

days means even a pilot who lives within one days drive of the contest must still take 2 weeks vacation. For pilots living several days drive away they would still require less vacation time.

No

No

No ...

Please highlight that non-IGC loggers are still acceptable at regional sports class contests. I had to borrow a logger after arriving at a contest where it was announced that an IGC logger would be required.

Question 5 regarding period of the contest was slanted toward a no answer. Rather than an abrupt change for all contests a more reasonable proposal would have made it an organizer option. Also, the con argument mentioned only the relatively few distant pilots who might be disadvantaged while ignoring the more numerous close pilots who, in addition to the organizers, would save a day. The Nixons, Kellermans and Manns would benefit from this change at Mifflin. Perhaps in the future you could ask for input from the proponents of change on wording of the questions and pro/cons. KS

Re 11.1/11.2: Prohibit team flying communications on 123.3

Regarding question 8.1 Should we compute the distance to the first turnpoint from your last exit from the start cylinder? Allowing anywhere 360° may not make sense, but the front 180° might make sense. This question was asked poorly and the explanation was poorly written, I do not think it will allow a good judgement of the question. If you start out the back of the cylinder then use the gaggles in the cylinder then exit again your last exit will usually be the front of the cylinder right?

Regionals should be 6-day contests only, not 5-day or 6-day. Nationals should not have a rest day. With the obvious exception of towplanes, motorized aircraft should not be allowed in any SSA sanctioned glider contest. Yes, I am talking about motorgliders here.

Review time period for CMs to get in their financial reports. Do not hold the Medallions hostage to the completion of the contest organizers paper work submission to SSA. Require mandatory safety briefing for tow pilots and review their abilities to tow ballasted ships.

Right from the start, Carl Herold said, A properly prepared ship will beat my numbers. One could argue that profiling, smoothing, sanding is just restoring the ship to its original new condition. A ship with significant modification like the Schueman Libelle (different airfoil) should be given a new handicap number. We are sliding down a slippery slope if we try to evaluate additions like Mylar, zig-zag, fairings, fences, etc. Who is going to assign numbers at each contest to these changes / additions? Will the same numbers be used at another contest? Sounds like a good way to ruin our most popular class. JJ

Rules clarification would help on: 1. Shape of safety finish volume (not cylinder, but cylinder on top of cone) 2. Logger and file security requirements / calibration requirements (esp nats) 3. Use of calibration traces for altitude corrections 8.1. I support measuring distance on the first leg from your chosen exit from the start cylinder, but not from your last exit.

Safety finish issues related to experience at the 2007 Sports Nationals. Safety finish rules were not well understood, even by very experienced pilots. Can the rules be simplified? There needs to be more flexibility in setting safety finishes. The allowed radius for the safety finish at the sports nats was well inside the storm. Thanks to the survey admin and rules committee for their work!

Sports class: Weight, winglets and wingspan can be measured for performance gains. Please explain how other modifications can be measured and the method of measuring them. I feel that by being too restrictive on how a Club Class glider is prepared you will discourage good pilots from considering this class and make us less competitive at world contest. THE REST OF THE WORLD allows these pilots to enhance performance in Club Class. Don't screw this up! We really need to join

the rest of the world and create a Club Class!

Starts item 8.1. The starts should be allowed out of any point or the top of the cylinder and should be the last exit from the cylinder.

The rule (10.8.5.4) intended to address a pilot leaving the wrong start cylinder is not worded well enough. At Fairfield the CD was unsure as to exactly how to apply it. The problem is the combination of the wording of 10.8.5.3, which states that a start occurs each time a sailplane exits a start cylinder, and 10.8.5.4, which states that a pilot may claim a start when NO fix is within the start cylinder. In the Fairfield case, several pilots were towed out through the correct start cylinder, left it before the start gate for their class opened, and never returned. The pilots were initially denied their start claims via 10.8.5.4 because they did not meet the criteria of no fixes within the start cylinder. I believe the wording of 10.8.5.3 and/or 10.8.5.4 should be changed to make it clear that no fixes within the start cylinder means no fixes within the start cylinder after the start gate for their class opens. John Good is familiar with this particular incident, and agreed at the time that the No fix within the start cylinder was intended to mean no fix within the start cylinder *after the start gate opens*. Regarding handicaps: Why are we still using the U.S. handicap system instead of the well-regarded international club-class handicaps? Is there a good reason for this? Just my \$0.02

Two place sailplanes should carry a smaller handicap when a second pilot is aboard

We need a rule that mandates less rain.

Yes: the SSA needs to adopt a policy similar to that used in other sanctioned air sports, where the sanctioning organization (in this case, the SSA) has a representative at a contest who supervises its conduct and certifies that SSAs rules, procedures etc are adequately followed, and if they are *not*, the contests results are not recognized by the SSA. This is needed to make sure that contest hosts and organizers (I was one in 2005) meet a minimum criteria in order for their contest to go on the books.

the rule providing for a scoring adjustment when a STD Class sailplane competes in the 15 Meter Class in a Regionals is not well publicized. It should be incorporated into the Rules so that sponsors are aware fo the option.

12.2: Did you experience or witness any significant safety-related incidents that the rules committee should be aware of?

1 How can we encourage no water or min takeoff weight in competitions? Towing operations are faster and much safer with lighter sailplanes. Wil Schumann was right 25 years ago. It makes little sense in contests to have everyone flying around heavy when there is another alternative (7 or 8#) Safety is comprimised as the wingloading is increased. 2. Should we consider a policy ref: Transponers or other traffic alerting devices? At the R4N meet the unique TFR issue ordered the sailplanes with transponders to turn them off. Seemed conuter intuitave and another example of the TSA WACKOs in action. We have already deminstrated that this may not work to our advantage.

Contestant landing in front of me at 18M Nats stopped in front me on the runway without clearing runway. Pilots at contests need to be instructed clearing the runway is important.

EXCESSIVE tow pilot chatter on 123.3 during launch

I refuse to understand or see why the rules committee has taken it on themselves to foster and promote CD training. BUT since they have, at least come up with a basic ground school course that the CD must be able to pass. One CD simply rels on chosing task advisors for the daily task calls, and then he/she doesnt even check the weather or even listen to the contest weather person. Stop using a start circle and a finish circle. Use a start line 10 miles long and you must be below the max start height for 2 minutes before you cross the start line. Where you cross the start line at is your business and its where your time and distance start. Since turn areas are 20 plus miles radius, it really doesnt matter anymore about where the start point is. ASTs have turnpoints that are 2 miles

across, so if you use a start line 10 miles long, its the pilots choice on where he should cross at. Let them figure where the best start is for any given day, and the rules committee stops thinking for everybody. Let the pilots think about upwind or downwind leg starts. Also, by stretching the start line out, it helps get rid of them leaches, and you know what I mean by that. A MAT, it really doesnt matter again where you cross the line, as again its a time/distance task with tps that are 2 miles across. Some speed guys go to the back, others go to the sides, and still others simply touch the tp radius. We really dont have turnpoints anymore, they are more like flop ins and flop outs, you can just flopin and then turn anywhere. Here you guys are trying to make a perfect start point, with flopin ins or floppin outs tps. That makes about as much cents as sub prime loans. A finish line is simply the easiest to use, and one inwhich you must cross the line at a certain altitude, instead of being able to pull up into the finish circle, as it is now. I have been in the circle and have a flippee pull straight up from below me and almost take me flipin out.

I sense that some pilots may not fully understand thermaling directions at turnpoints with regards to MAT tasks.

I was passed by a pilot who was very close. If I had made a turn, a collision would likely have resulted. It must be stressed that a radio call for the sake of safety should be made when passing in close proximity and is not considered a rule violation. I did not bring it up to the CM, but did have a conversation with the pilot, a junior, in a non-confrontational manner. In retrospect, this should have been brought up at the pilots meeting to facilitate discussion on an important safety concern. Additionally, another pilot thermalled exceedingly low. A safety violation was issued. However, I believe the pilot should have been asked to not continue flying. It was amazing that this did not result in an accident.

It appears that I have been blessed to participate in three different safety finish situations in the last two years, including the infamous one at the CCSC Sports Class Nationals. Clearly something has to be done about the safety finish cylinder, and clearly the CD has to be given more discretion to broadcast weather information vital to safety of flight, and if necessary, to cancel the day after the start gate has opened. In addition (also based on a semi-harrowing experience at the CCSC Sports Nats), I strongly believe a requirement should be added to the Nationals (FAI and Sports) for a fully functioning radio, and the CD should be given explicit authority to disqualify a pilot whose radio is malfunctioning to the point where it interferes significantly and/or repeatedly with normal pre-start contest activities such as roll calls, communications between the CD and his/her task advisors, and/or safety-related communications. We currently weigh each aircraft before first contest start at a Nationals, and I think we should also require an official radio check for each aircraft before first constest start. I have actually been on both sides of this issue, as I was a task advisor at CCSC when we had such horrendous radio problems with one particular glider, and I was apparently the owner of a stuck mike at the 15m Nats. When I became aware that I was the probable culprit, I simply turned off my radio and continued without. The next day, I had the problem fixed. If I could not have gotten the poblem fixed, I think it should have been within the CDs authority to disqualify me.

It seems that at every contest I have ever attended there is at least one sick towplane. I fully understand the dilemma of the organizers, but there should be some thought to minimum performance standards. And calibrated airspeed indicators, puhleeeeeeze! Am I the only one on the grid offering a silent prayer not to get that doggy tug?

It was raining too hard to see anything.

Many dangerous finishes/landings at Albert Lea. Many pre-start gaggles in the clouds.

No

No

No

No

No ...

No, I did not. One can not legislate good common sense.

No, but I was not very active this year.

No, none at Region 9.

No.

No.

No.

On question 10.1 I recognize that it may be difficult to actually enforce it, but a very strict penalty (one+ year suspension) for violation may help to prevent their use. On section 7 questions, you really need someone with specific expertise to assess what level of adjustment would be reasonable for a given modification - which might be beyond the ability of most CDs. The purpose of a handicap class (at least in this country) is to allow pilots with sailplanes of differing performance levels to compete fairly. Any modification (not 7.3 items) that cannot be reasonably performed in a few hours by most pilots starts to push the definition of sportmanship and should be accounted for. However, the items listed in 7.3 are considered standard and acceptable competition techniques.

Only that the handicap list needs to be vetted for ships whose handicaps are incorrect (and widely known as such) so that pilots can not job the system by bringing a XX to one contest to win that nationals.

See comments above 1/ Regional contests should not be mixed with Nationals. Put two national classes together if you need the additional numbers.

The 5 mile Safety Finish is ridiculous. Severe T-storms are much bigger.

The safety finish at the Sports Nats did not work effectively. IMHO this was because it was not opened early enough. I believe it should be always available to a pilot, not opened by the CD. The current radius is fine if it is always open.

The safety finish rules allowed (encouraged) a large number of pilots to fly into unsafe condition at the Sports Class Nationals this year. Yes, I was one of them. The smart pilots gave up points and landed away from the field without a safety finish. Please consider a larger radius or better yet allow the CD to call off the day if a safe and fair task will not be able to be completed.

Witnessed several safety related incidents at the sports nats, such as poor thermalling etiquette, massive start gate gaggles, radio equipment that blocked multiple frequencies with noise, and the infamous safety finish debacle. Thermalling etiquette and safety is not an issue fo the rules committee. Perhaps more could be done to prevent start gate gaggles, but as was the case as the sports nats, the gaggles were simply the result of thermal conditions and could not be prevented regardless of rules. Only the safety finish problem is pertinent to the rules committee.

no

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