



**UNITED STATES
SOARING TEAMS
&
WORLD SOARING
CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**MEDIA
BACKGROUND**

Media Guide to
United States
Soaring Teams &
World Soaring
Championships

Last Update
August, 2004

Media Background – United States Soaring Teams and World Gliding Championships

Competitive soaring is the highest expression of the sport of soaring. Each year U.S. soaring pilots from around the nation come together to compete for the titles of Regional and National Champion in their respective classes. These events have all the drama, intrigue and competitive challenge of more widely recognized sporting events. The best pilots are selected by the Soaring Society of America to represent the United States at World Soaring Championships.

Regional contests are normally low key local affairs with 30 – 50 sailplane pilots competing in several classes. National Championships are more competitive with 65 competitors all competing in a single class for the title of National Champion.

Each day competitors fly a specific task around turnpoints and back to the home field. Competition pilots often cover hundreds of miles and can spend 3-4 hours aloft each day of the competition. The day's winner is the competitor with the fastest speed around the course normally receiving 1000 points with fellow competitors receiving fewer points based on their respective speeds. The overall champion is the pilot with most points at the end of the event. Seconds count and victory can come by the smallest of margins. National competitors are ranked by the class of sailplane they fly with the top pilots in each class being selected by the Soaring Society of America to represent the United States at a World Soaring Championships.



The World Soaring Championships (WSC) are the highest expressions of competitive soaring with the best sailplane pilots from around the world coming together to determine a champion of champions. The highly competitive nature and international flavor of the World Gliding Championships have prompted some to compare the competitive challenge of WSC soaring to America's Cup yacht racing or Grand Prix auto racing.

In competitive soaring much has changed since 1950 when Paul MacCready represented the United States at the World Championships in Sweden. Then it was simple - one pilot, one sailplane, one class and one winner. Over the years new classes have been added until today there are potentially eighteen pilots representing the United States, flying in eight classes, from five international World Championship sites. The expansion in the number of classes is part of a global strategy to build participation in our sport. More classes mean more opportunity to participate in soaring and competitive soaring especially. The dream of becoming a World Champion is now available to a broad spectrum of soaring pilots including World, Club, Junior and Feminine class pilots.

World Soaring Championships & U.S. Soaring Teams

In the United States the Soaring Society of America (SSA) is the national organization responsible for all aspects of the sport including competitive soaring. The SSA has been selecting and fielding United States Soaring teams since 1950 when the famed Paul MacCready, Jr. competed in the 3rd World Gliding Championships held in Orebro, Sweden. There were thirty five contestants entered in this competition from several countries including Denmark, Finland, France, Great Brittan, Holland, Norway, Sweden and even South Africa.

The international flavor of World Soaring Championships has not changed over the years. In 1999 the 26th World Soaring Championships took place in Germany with over 120 pilots from 24 countries competing.

Over the years four pilots for the United States have captured the title of World Soaring Champion on five occasions starting in the 1956 win by the famed Paul MacCready, Jr. who would become an innovative aviation leader in this country.

United States Soaring World Champions		
Year	Champion	Place
1956	Paul MacCready, Jr.	Saint Yan, France
1968	Andrew J. Smith	Leszno, Poland
1970	George Moffat, Jr.	Marfa, Texas (USA)
1974	George Moffat, Jr.	Waikerie, Australia
1985	Doug Jacobs	Rieti, Italy

United States Soaring Team members do not compete for prize money or fame but for the love of the sport and the respect of their peers. There is a substantial financial commitment needed and a high level of dedication, skill and drive required to earn a position on a US Soaring Team. The object is to go wing to wing with the best soaring pilots in the world and win. Typical U.S. Team Pilots have over 2,000 hours of soaring experience having competed in 15-25 national championships over a 10-20 year carrier.

To see a listing of U.S. Soaring teams and the biographies of current team pilots visit the SSA US Team Web site. <http://www.ssa.org/usteam>

US Team Selection

United States Soaring Team pilots are chosen by the Soaring Society of America (SSA) based on recent performance in National and World-level competition. After each of the US Nationals, competitors' scores are compared to the winner's score. Each of the national winners receives a score of 100 with the rest of the field ranked based on how close their score is to the winners. The pilot's current and two previous year's performance are considered with the current year being weighted more heavily.

US Soaring Team rankings can be very close with only a fraction of a point separating competitors.



US Team Funding

While many international competitors receive funding from their governments, U.S. soaring teams are funded by two types of personal contributions - direct and perpetual. Direct contributions are available for use by the teams at their full value normally in the period they are contributed. Each year thousands of Soaring Society of America members participate in sweepstakes, buy a raffle ticket, purchasing team merchandise or simply mail in a check earmarked for use by the team.



The perpetual contributions to team are invested and held in trust specifically for funding U.S. Soaring Teams. The income from the invested funds provides perpetual support for generations of future U.S. Soaring Teams. This has been a successful and balanced approach to team funding.

Sweepstakes

Every two years the SSA sponsors a U.S. Soaring Team Sweepstakes. Typicality first prize is a valuable soaring related item. The Sweepstakes program is typically administered by the Soaring Society of America. This income source typically accounts for almost forty percent of the U.S. Team's budget in prior years.

Fund Raisers, Merchandise & Donations

The remaining US Team budget consists of, merchandise sales and individual donations. Over the year clubs and soaring organizations raise funds for the U.S. Team, the Team sells commemorative merchandise and individual supporters all contribute to help send our teams to compete internationally.

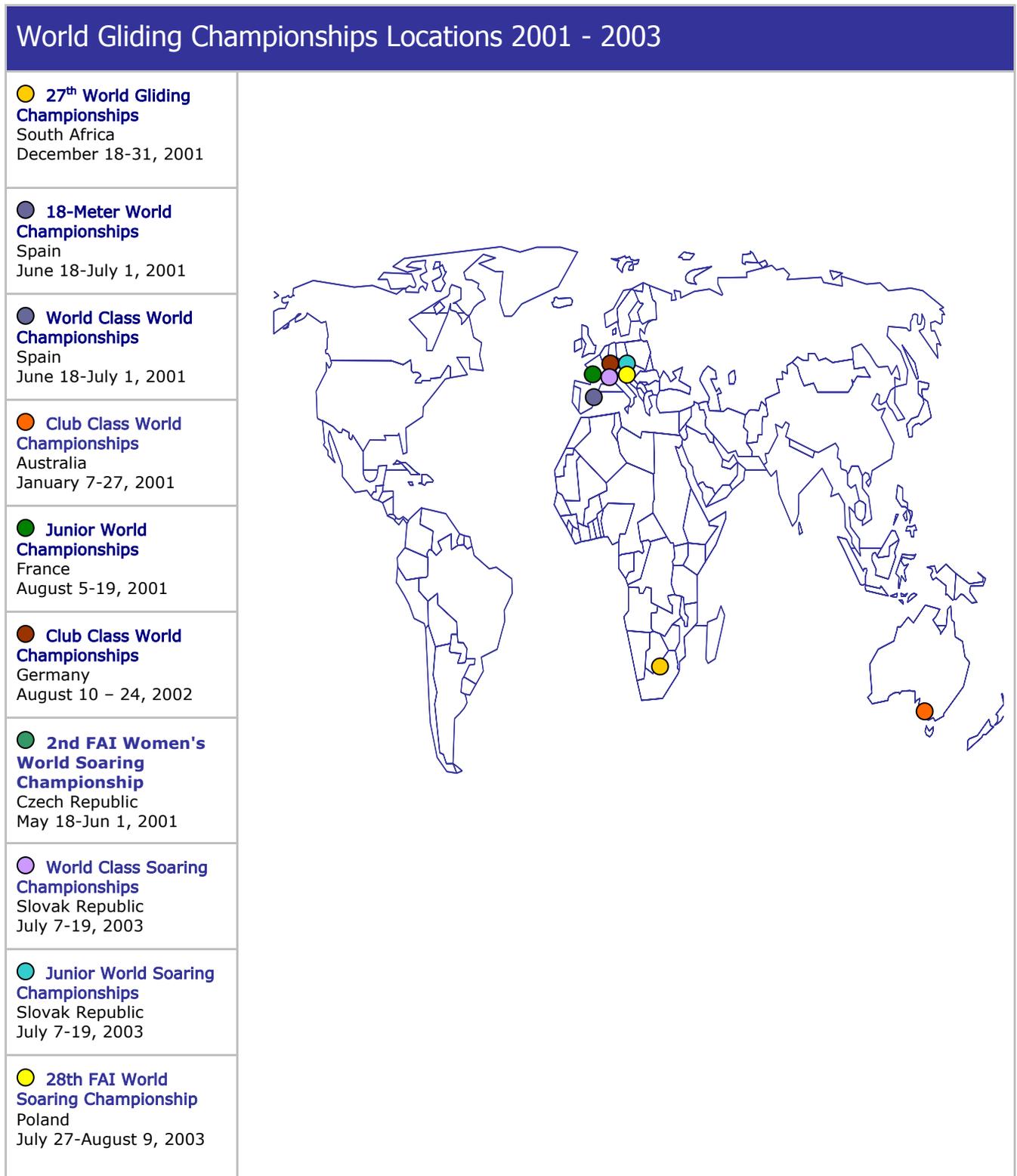
SSA Foundation Funding

The Robertson and Woods Trusts are administered by the SSA Foundation and chartered to help support United States Soaring Teams participating in FAI World Soaring Championships. In this case the income from contributions is used to help field U.S. Soaring Teams participation while the original contribution remains intact. As part of the SSA Foundation, the Robertson Trust, provides contributors with an independent foundation managed by trustees providing for long-term security and stability while bringing the internal discipline necessary to preserve and manage perpetual endowments. The Robert Robertson Memorial Team Fund has an established track record of growth and service to the US Soaring Teams since its establishment in 1988. See the [Robertson Web Site](#) for more.

Self-Funding

With the current crisis in U.S. Team funding many teams have turned to their members to self-fund participation in World Soaring Championships. While some level of pilot support is to be expected over the long-term, the interest in competitive soaring will be curtailed if it comes with a hefty price tag to participate in World Soaring Championships. Typical levels of self funding now run in the \$ 5,000 to \$7,000 range.

Example of the location and timing of World Gliding Championships.



Sailplane Classes and World Soaring Championships

Each World Championships is made up of one or more of the five existing classes of sailplanes or pilots. For example Multi-class World Soaring Championships are made up of the Open, 18-Meter, 15-Meter and Standard Classes.

Multi-Class World Soaring Championships	<p>This event started it all. The first World Gliding Championships was held on Germany's Wasserkuppe in 1937 making this event the official grandfather of all World Gliding Championships.</p> <p>Up until 1950 all competitors flew in the open class regardless of glider type. In 1950 the two-place class was added. In 1958 the two-place class was replaced with the Standard class.</p> <p>In 1978 the very popular 15-Meter class was added to this event creating what most pilots think of as the three traditional FAI classes.</p> <p>The 18-Meter class is new on the list of FAI classes to be included in the growing number of World Gliding Championships. The dates below indicate the year the class was added to World Soaring Championships.</p>	
	Open (1937)	The Open Class is the "unlimited" class, home to the world's highest-performing and most expensive gliders. There are no design restrictions placed on the open class so wingspans range up to 100 feet in length.
	Standard (1958)	The Standard Class is another class that limits span to 15 meters. In addition, gliders cannot use performance increasing wing flaps, a restriction that tends to make Standard-class gliders a bit less expensive.
	15-Meter (1978)	In the 15-Meter Class the wingspans are limited to 15 meters (49.2 feet) with no other design restrictions. This is the class that, worldwide, includes the greatest number of gliders.
	18-Meter (2003)	In this class, the only important restriction is on span, which must not exceed 18 meters (59 ft). This class is the only one to admit motorized gliders; some models include an engine that can be extended to launch and retrieve the glider or stowed away for pure soaring flight.

Club Class World Championships	<p>The Club Class was added to World Soaring Championships in 2001 with the first championships held in Australia.</p>	
	Sport / Club (2001)	A class open to most sailplanes, with handicaps to equalize performance. Gliders across a reasonably wide range of performance are allowed; each is assigned a handicap based on its performance qualities.

World Class World Championships	As a relatively new class the first FAI World Class championships were held in Inonu, Turkey in 1997. Leszno, Poland was the site for the second World Class WGC. The World Air Games in Spain will be the site of the third World Class FAI World Gliding Championships.	
	World (1997)	<p>This is the "one-design" class - all pilots must fly the PW-5 "World Class" glider. Tight equipment rules ensure that all gliders are equal in performance.</p> <p>The World Class concept embraces the concept of an affordable, safe and competitive glider. The PW-5 was selected after winning the World Class Glider Competition organized by the FAI. There were forty-two designs from twenty countries submitted in the first round and eleven designs made it to prototype. Six designs made it to the final stage in 1992. In the spring of 1993 the IGC declared the PW-5, designed by a team from Warsaw University of Technology the winner and new World class design.</p>

Junior World Gliding Championships	The Junior Class was added to World Soaring Championships in 1999 in Holland.	
	Junior (1999)	<p>A first international "student" meet was held by the Dutch at Terlet in 1985, as a way for young glider pilots to fly competitively among peers. Further contests established a tradition of European competition every two years. The idea of a fully sanctioned youth contest grew with each event until the first FAI World Junior Gliding Championships were held in 1999, once again in Holland. The USA has not missed a chance to compete on this international stage since 1989. There are typically two Classes (Standard and Club) but adding Classes has been discussed frequently. The top age for any competitor is 26. Contestants typically fly sailplanes from the 15-Meter, Standard and Club Class</p>

Feminine World Gliding Championships	The Feminine Class was added to world soaring championships in 2001 in Lithuania.	
	Feminine (2001)	<div data-bbox="599 1245 800 1392" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>The feminine class was created in 2001. The first World Women's Gliding Championship took place in the same year. The 2001 1st Feminine World Soaring Championships was held in Pociunai, Lithuania. Twelve countries were represented fielding 41 participating pilots. There were three classes in this event, 15-Meter, Standard, and Club.</p> <p>All competitors must be female. Contestants typically fly sailplanes from the 15-Meter, Standard and Club Class</p>

Soaring Related Background Web Sites

www.ssa.org

Soaring Society of America (SSA) home page. The SSA is the national organization responsible for soaring in the United States. Lots of good information on the sport and the organization here.

www.ssa.org/UsTeam/

US Soaring Teams. Organized and funded as part of the SSA the US Soaring Teams Web site features team members, pilot's biographies and much more about the US Soaring Teams.

www.ssa.org/usteam/press

The one stop media press room on soaring brought to you by U.S. soaring teams.

<http://acro.harvard.edu./ssa/>

This site has a host of soaring related information including the turnpoint exchange, flight recordings from contests and all the details of US team selection.

http://www.soarmn.com/soaring_links/index.htm

The excellent soaring link page by Paul Remde who has collected a huge variety of soaring related links. A must visit and four stars.

<http://www.miskin.demon.co.uk/index.htm>

This site gives a very good step by step idea and many references about learning to fly sailplanes.

<http://www.webring.org/hub?ring=soaring&id=64&next5>

This is a soaring web ring that allows you to randomly browse many of the best soaring related web sites

<http://www.glidingmagazine.com>

This site is an online magazine sponsored by the Soaring Society of America.

<http://www.fai.org/>

Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI), the world's air sports federation, was founded in 1905. It is a non-governmental and non-profit making international organization with the basic aim of furthering aeronautical and astronautical activities worldwide. Ever growing, FAI is now an organization of some 90 member countries.

<http://www.fai.org/Gliding/>

The International Gliding Commission (IGC) of the FAI is the Air Sports Commission which is responsible for all air sports activities involving gliders and motor gliders with the exception of glider aerobatics.

Other Soaring and U.S. Team Media Background Available

These resources are available for your use on the United States Soaring Team Press Room which includes press releases, media clippings, background, fact sheets, press images, web links and a championship calendar. See www.ssa.org/usteam/ust_press

United States Soaring Team Press Room

This is your one stop online media resource developed to help you craft a factual and newsworthy story on the exciting sport of soaring and United States Soaring Teams. This media resource is brought to you by the Soaring Society of America and United States Soaring Teams. Some of the resources available in the U.S. Soaring Team Press Room are:

- Soaring Society of America
- Sport of Soaring
- Sailplanes & Gliders
- Competitive Soaring
- Press Releases
- U.S. Soaring Teams
- History of the Sport
- Calendar of Events
- Clipping Archive