

Towline Times

Tampa Bay Soaring Society Newsletter

April 2007

Flight Line Procedure Update

by Dennis Dix

THE GOOD NEWS

To enhance the safety of operations, in March the following operational policies were codified:

- 1.) A positive control check for all gliders, regardless of ownership or assembly status, is mandatory before the glider's first flight of the day.
- 2.) The ground crewmember with the rope shall ask the pilots if the spoilers are closed and locked before hooking the glider up.
- 3.) No visitors or newcomers are permitted beyond the hold-short line. They are never to be 'drafted' into launching a glider. If club members are not available, the launch is not to take place.
- 4.) No negative comments will be made to a pilot who lands long. The board feels these sarcastic comments are placing negative peer pressure on beginner pilots to approach low over the trees and hit the numbers.
- 5.) While in the traffic pattern for landing, the radio calls should not identify the glider by its make or model. Simply announce yourself with the words 'glider' and N-number. This is being asked to avoid confusion among the airplane pilots who don't know what a Grob or Blanik is, but who can at least identify a glider by sight.

One month later, I am pleased to report that club members have embraced these procedures and are consistently applying them. In particular, Jim Watts and the line crew chiefs are to be commended for their commitment to the culture of safety.

THE REST OF THE NEWS

There is still room for improvement and it is far less painful to learn from other pilot's mistakes than from your own. With this in mind, I will relay a series of circumstances that resulted in another cracked canopy. On Saturday last, March 31st, there was no line chief on duty, oops #1. The late posting of the line chief roster for the last weekend of month didn't help, but neither do the too frequent 'no shows' which as often as not occur without notice. Oops #2, with about half a dozen club members scattered between the picnic table and the flight line, I radioed soaring ground for assistance. There was no immediate response even with the Pawnee poised beside the runway with prop spinning, just waiting. A few minutes later Jim Watts came over after towing another glider to the flight line. Neither the cart driver, Bob Scheurer, or Jim were thrilled to see a flight instructor walking the wing of glider with a new club member sitting solo in the in the front seat of a Grob 103 headed for

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the launch position on 36. However, having done this before with an L-13 on several occasions out of “necessity” and wanting keep things moving and get all of my instruction and introduction flights completed before sunset, I literally threw caution to the wind. Heck, I had also performed unassisted aero tow launches in a hang glider last year so this should have been a piece of cake. And, it might have been so if the pre-launch checklist had been performed by me differently. After getting the Gob in position on the runway for launch I jumped in the back seat and decided to get the belts fastened before closing the canopy, oops #3. The thought was that there would be less possibility of the launch beginning prematurely with the wing man and tow pilot having full view of this pre-launch condition. Also, there would be less chance of launching with an unlocked canopy per the launch checklist, right? And then there is omni-present Florida sun which causes pilots under glass to get a bit steamy before launch.

Flashback, my first launch the club Diamant several years ago occurred while the wing man was still giving the take up slack sign! I was not fully prepared to launch at that moment but elected to commit to it rather than abort right away. That was an unsettling introduction to the launch of: (1) a high performance glass ship, (2) a CG hook aerotow, and (3) retractable gear. It was one of the more intense tows I have ever flown. Fortunately, it went well and once off tow the flight became memorable for other reasons, like heading east half way to Orlando at 100+ mph under a cloud street, oh yes!

But back to the March 31, 2007 Grob 103 launch (or more precisely, the flawed and subsequently aborted Grob launch). The decision to NOT close the canopy prior to buckling in was deliberate but it was also wrong. My intrepidation over that earlier uncommanded launch years before was still clouding my judgment year's later. Further, the canopy part of the launch checklist is NOT about lowering the canopy, it is about securing the canopy, duh. A strong easterly gust brought the error to light when it slammed the rear canopy shut a few seconds after I let go of it to buckle in. To their credit, I will state that the line crew were not comfortable with my delay in lowering the canopy. However, during the few seconds in which the incident unfolded there was not enough time for them to communicate this.

LESSON LEARNED

I encourage TBSS members to give additional thought to their take-off and landing checklist procedures and what each element really means. Are you fully grasping the reality of it? When at the ‘E’ of the launch checklist I hear pilots say “Emergency procedure 200 feet”. What does that mean? What should you do below 200 feet? If the only response is land straight ahead then you would be reducing the few options available to only one, and possibly NOT the best one. When at the “U” on the landing checklist, I sometimes hear a pilot say “under carriage” or “landing gear down” but the pronouncement isn't followed by a visual or tactile check of the landing gear mechanism to verify that the wheel is actually

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down and locked! While this may seem to be a small thing it becomes a big thing when you transition into the club's Lark! Let's pay closer attention to the meaning and substance of each part of the check list acronyms.

April Tow-Pilot & Line-Chief Schedules

by George McKenna & John Ellis

Day	Date	Tow-Pilot	Line-Chief
Sun.	1	Ralph Tarver	Ted Andros
Wed.	4	Buz Wilson	
Sat.	7	Don Thomasson	Dick Guyer
Sun.	8	Dan Becker	Allan Broadrib
Wed.	11	Bill Brewis	
Sat.	14	George McKenna	Denis Bell
Sun.	15	Ralph Tarver	Jerry Carrol
Wed.	18	Dan Becker	
Sat.	21	Buz Wilson	Joe Burely
Sun.	22	Bruce Patton	David Colado
Wed.	25	Chip Chipman	
Sat.	28	Don Thomasson	Richard Enright
Sun.	29	Dan Becker	Carl Bueler

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Editor's Notes

by Dennis Dix

- **TBSS Cookouts**

1. The last two cookouts (March corned beef and April deep fried turkey) were well attended, each around 33 people - twice what we usually get. April's cookout had as many ladies as men.

2. People need to be reminded that at the end of the day when the office is locked-TURN OFF THE AIR CONDITIONER. It's been left running for several days recently.

- **TBSS Glider Use Reminder**

There is a one (1) hour limit on the gliders. If everyone follows the rule we should be able to get more pilots up in the air. The clock starts 1 hour from the start of take off roll and stops on return to the staging area; not one hour from release, or 1 hour and still headed for cloud base. However, don't forget that you can call either the tow plane, or soaring ground to see if the glider is needed back. If your aircraft is not needed then they can stay up until called. But, the radio call should be timed to keep within the 1 hour window. If you radio the tow or ground and do not get a response then it is automatic that you start back, that is unless the Pawnee is already headed for the hanger and your trying to stay up as long as Hans Konle. In that case, keep on dreaming with the rest of us ☺

- **30th Birdman Rally in 2006 at Kyoto** – on you tube check out the thrill found in the roots of our beloved sport, especially when you have a cheering squad. The language barrier should not be problem as the body language is universal.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RyOSMllXn9s>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4imPDyIVIE>

Next for your consideration is the June 2007 Red Bull Flugtag event in Nashville. I wonder if anyone in the club is up (or is it down?) for this.

<http://www.redbullflugtagusa.com/>