

Competition Flying

A couple of times a year some pilots pack up their gliders or book club gliders and head to various competitions around the state and even the country. These events give pilots a great time in both flying and also socialization. Competitions need not be a scary or overwhelming place but, that said pilots DO need a certain amount of skill and experience level before they are allowed to fly as pilot in command. Pilots wanting to fly as P1 in a competition need the following:

- Be current with the glider the pilot is wishing to fly in the comp
- Obtain a competition licence from the GFA

Obtaining a competition licence

A competition licence can be obtained from the GFA for around \$10 and is valid for 2 years. The form to apply for the licence requires a signature from the CFI stating that he/she is confident of the pilot's ability to fly in a competition. The pre-requisite for this at DDSC is:

- Open cross country rating (which includes an outlanding)
- Experience with gagging and general flying with other gliders
- Low finish endorsement (not always necessary but can help)

Easter Comps

Every year clubs in S.E. QLD share hosting the Queensland Easter Competition which is held at either Dalby or Chinchilla airfield. These comps are run with fun in mind and are perfect for pilots who are flying in their first competition. Tasks are set with newer pilots in mind and combined with the friendly terrain around the chosen airfields gives a fun and relaxing flying atmosphere.

Flying as P2 in a two seater

Those that would like to fly in a competition but do not have the required experience can fly with an experienced pilot in a two seater. Darling Downs Soaring Club usually has at least one twin seat training glider at most Easter and State competitions with the intention of taking less experienced pilots around a competition task. Flying as P2 with a suitably qualified pilot means that the pilot does not need any of the above experience but basic flying ability makes flying among many other gliders safer, so early solo is needed at a minimum.

Preparing for a Competition

Assuming the pilot is fully qualified to fly in a competition and they do not own their own glider they will need to book a club glider. Booking a glider is a simple task of filling out a glider hire form which is available on the club website and forwarding it to the club CFI a month or two before the comp starts as the training panel will need to approve the booking. Once the approval has been given it is the pilot's responsibility to check over the glider for damage. Any damage should be noted prior to

taking the glider away and they should make sure that both the glider and trailer are in good order and fully functional.

If using a club glider then a club parachute will be needed so find one that is comfortable for you to use. If trim weights are needed then they need to be organised. Make sure to take batteries for the glider as well as taking a spare battery charger for it.

Glider Tie-Down Gear

Apart from the outlanding tie-down gear in the glider more permanent tie-down gear needs to be organised as the glider will most likely be tied down outside for the comp duration. This gear needs to be soft enough not damage the gelcoat so simply using rope is not good enough. There are a number of different varieties of tie down straps and ground stakes but pictured is one version.



This tie-down strap has been made from rope and an old car seat belt to ensure nothing scratches the wing. Regular rope and large pegs over the tailboom will hold the tail down.



Ground stakes can be as simple as a large tent peg or a star picket but both suffer from either sticking out of the ground and puncturing car tyres and not being practical in different soils as well as being difficult to remove. The ground stake pictured is simple to make/safe if run over/works well in different soils by using different sized pegs and is easy to remove.

Make sure that the tail is also tied down. This can be done with rope and large pegs.

Flight Logger

Some form of flight logger will be required for scoring purposes. What type of logger that can be used will depend on the competition. At an Easter comps any logger that can produce an IGC. file may be accepted (FLARM or even a Garmin GPS). At a Nationals comp only approved loggers will be accepted. If using a club glider then a club Cloibri logger can be used in the single seat gliders.

There are a number of ways to get the logged flight to the scorer and this will be noted on the competition website. The traditional way is to give the logger to the scorer the logger who will download the flight and give it back in the morning. Another method is for the pilot to download the flight themselves on their laptop, then copy the flight file via USB memory stick to the competition supplied scorer's computer. The most recent method is for the pilot to download the flight on their laptop and copy it to the scorer via the internet. If using a colibri on a personal computer there is a download cable available to use. At all comps there are always people and computers available to help with those who are having trouble so don't be afraid to ask.

Turnpoints/Startpoints

Competitions use their own turnpoints and these can be usually found on the Worldwide Soaring Turnpoint Exchange via a link from the competition website. Included in these will be the startpoints. In a competition there will be around 9 startpoints. These will usually be something like STA1 - STA2 - STA3 - STB1 - STB2 - STB3 - STC1 - STC2 - STC3. These startpoints (ST) are divided by three groups of three (Alpha – Bravo – Charlie). At the start of the comp the pilot may be given a slip of paper saying that which group they can start on which days (e.g. first day Alpha, second day Bravo). What this means is that on the first day the pilot can start on any of the Alpha startpoints (STA1 - STA2 - STA3) and Bravo startpoints on the second day etc. This system is designed to stop pilots following other pilots during the comp as they will most likely be starting on different points.



Wet Weather Glider Care

With the glider being tied-down outside for over a week there is a possibility that it may be subject to rain. While water in general is not harmful to a glider there are some areas that need to be water proofed when subjected to rain periods. The gliders airbrake boxes will fill up with water if allowed so they need to be taped up with electrical tape. The canopy side window and side vent also need to be taped up to prevent water leaking into the cockpit. The front vent in the gliders nose may also need to be taped up. To prevent water getting into the plumbing, the T.E probe and Pitot tube also need to be taped up or have their covers installed. When using tape it is recommended to use a colour other than white so it is obvious when it is time to remove the tape.