

## International Hand Launch Glider Festival

Steven Stricklett

Are you a closet hand launch glider pilot? Have you ever actually built one of those small lightweight gliders, but kept it in your garage or worse yet the trunk of your car because it wasn't as exotic as the unlimited ships everyone else was flying. Have you every taken a hand launch glider out to the field to fly only to be told that you will be in the way of the other flyers, and if you want to fly it you should go over to that far away corner of the field by the trees where the weeds are up to your thighs. Have you ever waited patiently in the pits for all of the other pilots to finish for the day only then to pull out your hand launch and to start flinging it around as everyone else is going off to have lunch together. Have you ever skipped a morning of work to sneak out to the field to take advantage of those good morning thermals on an off day when no one else is at the field. Have you ever gotten up before the sun was up in order to get to the field long before other pilots so you could get some hand launch flying in before anyone else shows up and sets up the winches. Have you ever pulled a new hand launch glider out of your car only to have some foam brained, epoxy eyed composite guy sarcastically say "New airplane? Cute. Polyhedral huh."

Well, if you can identify with any of these situations, or if you have ever been subjected to any number of other insulting situations, maybe you are in fact a hand launch glider person. Well, if you are, rejoice! Your time has come! You can now feel like you belong. Hand launchers no longer have to feel like second class citizens. Now you can step forward and be properly recognized as the talented R/C pilots that you are.

The *Torrey Pines Gulls* are pleased to report that history has been made. The first inaugural two day competition for hand launch gliders has been completed and it was an overwhelming success. The

**INTERNATIONAL HAND LAUNCH GLIDER FESTIVAL** was held on October 29 & 30 in San Diego, California. The weather on Saturday

started off with a low cloud cover which burned off by the second round. The rest of the day was perfect for a hand launch contest, not too hot and not too cold, and by the second round the thermals were popping everywhere. The wind did come up in one round on Saturday and tried to discourage us, but all it did was cause the thermals to break off the field a little faster. Some of the best lift of the day was during that round. For instance, the author launched into five thermals in a row in that round.

Sunday broke with the sun shining brightly and only a couple of lazy wisps of clouds could be seen anywhere. It was one of those picture post card days that San Diego is so famous for. Again, the thermals were active all day long with many pilots finding there planes at the 1,000 foot level just two minutes into their flights. The only problems then were keeping the planes in sight and keeping track of how many loops and rolls you performed on the way down.

The contest featured ten rounds of man on man competition followed by the top ten pilots being pitted all together in one flight group for the three additional rounds. Think of that! Thirteen rounds of flying competition. I don't know of any other contest in the country that offers that much competitive flying time. That's almost two hours of competitive flying time over two days. That's over twice as much as the other big contests that I know of. This, in a practical sense, provided the opportunity for anybody to have a bad round and still be able to get back into contention, in addition to providing a great amount of flying pleasure.

The plan had been to force the pilot who won to do so by facing the best the field of competition had to offer all at one time. The points from the fly off were added to the scores already accumulated through the first ten rounds, so the leaders maintained their relative advantages entering the fly off. However, it did afford the opportunity for the top ten pilots to reposition themselves during the last three rounds. The fly off did exactly that with Mike Reagan, from Thousand Oaks Soaring Society and the tenth place pilot after the first ten rounds, moving all the way up to fifth and capturing a trophy by the end of the fly off.

Several of the tasks were

relatively new to hand launch glider competition, but had been tried out in recent contests with great success, including the AMA Nats. (The *Torrey Pines Gulls* are the club that recently ran the soaring portion of the AMA Nats in Lubbock, Texas.) One of the new ones was to accomplish the following flight times in sequence: 15 sec, 30 sec, 45 sec, ... , 105 sec, 120 sec. This task calls for nine minutes of flying in ten minutes of working time. A pilot had unlimited throws to complete this task, but he must complete each time before trying for the succeeding one. In other words he must accomplish the 15 sec. flight before he can start trying for the 30 sec flight. There are eight possible flights in this round and the pilots are scored based on how many of the assigned flight times they were able to accomplish.

Another of the new tasks was increasing flight times. The object of this task was to accomplish flights of increasing times. If a flight (B) were longer than the previous flight (A), the pilot received credit for it. If a flight (B) were not longer than the previous flight (A), then it did not count and he would have to try again to get a flight longer than the last one (A) that he got credit for. In other words, for a flight to count it had to be the longest flight the pilot had flown to that point in the round. In this round, the pilots were scored on total credited flight time.

This particular task presented a real tactical challenge and the pilots really had to keep tabs on what the other pilots in their heats were doing. For instance, if you caught a thermal with eight minutes left in the round, should you only fly long enough to make a flight longer than the last one and then try to relaunch into that thermal or should you try to max the round with that thermal and chance falling out of it with, lets say four minutes remaining in the round. If that happened you would not have enough time left in the round to be able to make another increasing flight. Yet if one of the other pilots got into the same thermal and did max the round, you ran the risk of getting buried in that round.

There was not a lot of diversity in the airplanes being flown. By far the predominate airplane was the Cr Aircraft "Climmax" with over half the field flying

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it. The only other production airplane was the "Monarch" which was flown by three pilots. The balance of the field was made up of original design aircraft.

There were four straight wing aileron planes which all gave a good showing for themselves. (Two of them placed first and second.) Based on the way these planes flew, they very well may be the hand launch plane of the future. Their maneuverability became legendary after the first couple of rounds. The difference between these planes and the polyhedral type airplane is like the difference between a hummingbird and a pelican. The aileron planes were doing figure eights inside of the same space that the polyhedral planes were doing tight thermal turns. It was very impressive.

One of the reasons for the success of this contest was the fact that a Dinner was provided at the field on Saturday night. What made this dinner different than most other contest BBQs was the fact that it was catered by a Tony Roma's Restaurant. It very well may have been the best part of the weekend. It definitely was the biggest draw. More dinners were served than there were contestants.

Based on the feedback from this year's contest the field should be even stronger and larger next year. If you ever wanted to have a great time flying hand launch gliders and fly against some of the best in the world, this is the event to come to. So plan now to delight yourself with two days of hand launch ecstasy.

Trophies were awarded to the top five finishers and the top three man team. The results of the contest follow.

#### Top Team

Steve Condon  
Paul Naton  
Charlie Richardson

#### Fly Off Results

1 Joe Wurts	PSS	12,843.1
2 Arthur Markiewicz	TPG	11,459.8
3 Gordon Jennings	CVRC	11,174.5
4 Steve Condon	TPG	11,045.3
5 Mike Reagan	TOSS	11,012.2
6 George Joy	TPG	10,918.0
7 Paul Naton	TPG	10,886.5
8 Charlie Richardson	TPG	10,398.7
9 Bill West	TPG	10,331.3
10 Don Van Gundy	TPG	10,219.2

#### Final Standings Before Fly Off

1 Joe Wurts	PSS	9843.1
2 Arthur Markiewicz	TPG	9302.6
3 Steve Condon	TPG	9238.1
4 Paul Naton	TPG	9081.7
5 Gordon Jennings	CVRC	8938.3
6 Bill West	TPG	8716.9
7 Don Van Gundy	TPG	8714.5
8 George Joy	TPG	8672.7
9 Charlie Richardson	TPG	8663.6
10 Mike Reagan	TOSS	8587.3
11 Steven Stricklett	TPG	8115.3
12 Scott Condon	TPG	7616.2
13 Stan Sadorf	ISS	7377.0
14 Ben Clerx	HSS	6867.5
15 David Condon	TPG	6757.2
16 Ken Raymond	TPG	6561.1
17 Paul Trist Jr	TOSS	6203.9
18 Todd Kingsbury	TPG	6030.8
19 Mark Gumprecht	TPG	6022.0
20 Rick Shelby	TPG	5981.0
21 Ron Scharck	TPG	5896.7
22 Don Richmond	TPG	5252.6
23 Erik Larson	TPG	5162.1
24 Ryan Fry	TPG	4784.3
25 Jerry Fry	TPG	3997.9
26 Marvin Wager	TPG	3090.1

#### Crash of the Month!

*Dave Condon.*

While flying in the November 13 monthly thermal contest I was involved in a mid-air collision that resulted in an "interesting" crash landing. During the second round I was sharing lift with three other planes, rotating the same direction but off to one side. Since our circles were not concentric when we were closest, we were going opposite directions. It did not "appear" that I was at the same altitude or all that close to the others but I obviously was as I hit Richard Strobel's plane. The planes came together about 12 to 18 inches out from the wing root at relative high velocity, head-on! I am not really sure what gyration Richard's plane went through, but mine rotated rapidly and both wing tips flew off. The Genesis immediately went from 113 to 60 inch wing span and 80 to 65 ounce weight.

To my surprise, I was able to fly the plane as I had the ailerons coupled to the flaps. However, it was flying fast and down! Shortly after I regained control, my timer said I had 22 seconds for a five

minute flight. Since the plane was coming down anyway, I decided to try to land at the 5 minute mark. I tried to slow the plane down by dropping the flaps. BIG Mistake! The plane went into a dive but it was high enough to recover after the flaps were closed. I came down low and attempted to burn off speed as I approached the field. I estimate the speed was 3 to 4 times what I normally land. I touched down (2 seconds over) as easy as I could and it slid about 75 feet before stopping (no skeg). The plane looked OK but when I picked it up the fuselage broke just behind the wing. I speculate that it fractured at the collision and broke further by the impact at landing and finished when I picked it up.

A few laughs were had as the plane took off in the unlimited class but landed in the 2 meter class.

Inspection of the center wing panel showed little damage and it appeared the tips were thrown off due to centrifugal force. When the tips were recovered later that day they were badly damaged. One of the tip's carbon joiners was missing along with it's mating "box" from the spar. It also had major damage to the skin at the tip's root joint. The other tip's carbon joiner and it's "box" were broken loose from the spar but still attached to the panel. The center panel was broken from the leading edge to the spar (top and bottom) where the initial impact occurred. Inspection of the damage in detail confirmed what I have believed from previous damage to the Genesis; under all flying conditions the model is extremely strong, however, when the wing is hit the skin easily fractures and can be difficult to repair.

Probably a good lesson from this is not to circle anywhere near another plane, if possible, but if you must then fly in the same circle in the same direction. The ability to perceive relative positions at higher altitude is poor, at best.

As a note, Richard Stobbe's plane had a fractured leading edge but it was one of Fred Sage's fiberglass-over-foam wings. It looked like it could be readily repaired as he flew the rest of the contest with clear tape over the area.

