



# United States Soaring Team Task Force

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## Topic – 10 Team Selection

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This document is for discussion purposes only and should not be considered the policy of U.S. Soaring Teams. Instead, this document provides a starting place from which to develop more accountable, transparent, competitive and sustainable United States Soaring Teams. You can help shape the future of U.S. Soaring Teams by making your comments regarding this document to John Seaborn ([planned@boulder.net](mailto:planned@boulder.net)) or Jim Payne ([jpaviation@aol.com](mailto:jpaviation@aol.com))

All taskforce documents are posted on the taskforce web page  
[http://www.ssa.org/UsTeam/ust\\_taskforce.htm](http://www.ssa.org/UsTeam/ust_taskforce.htm)

## U.S. Soaring Team Selection

### Purpose & Goal

The purpose of the team selection policy is to clearly define the process by which team members will be selected for each World Soaring Championships class, consistent with the goals for that class.

### Philosophy & Discussion

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. The winner of each Nationals receives a score of 100 with the other contestants ranked relative to the winners score. The pilot's current year and the best of the two previous years' performance are considered when selecting US Soaring Team members 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. When US pilots do well in world level contests they earn bonus points that count toward their selection to future US Soaring Teams. The number of team members who represent the United States at a World Soaring Championships is ultimately determined by the World Championship contest organizers and the SSA.

See the US Pilot Rankings by class compiled by John Leibacher and hosted on Günther Eichhorn's Soaring Server. [http://acro.harvard.edu/SOARING/JL/US\\_TEAM/HomePage.html](http://acro.harvard.edu/SOARING/JL/US_TEAM/HomePage.html)

The complete description of the U.S. Soaring Team Selection Method is available at the end of this document.

The current selection process, while documented in an unnecessarily complex manner, provides a relatively simple, fair and unbiased manner for selecting team pilots and is considered an improvement over the voting system it replaced. There is little support for changing the selection process in any dramatic manner. This document presents several areas for clarification and improvement.

The current selection process applies to the selection of U.S. Soaring Teams from eight classes (Open, 18-Meter, 15-Meter, Standard, Junior, Club, World and Feminine). Each class has its own special selection objectives with the more established classes having competitive supremacy as their main goal while the less established classes many have other primary objectives. The current selection system accommodates these differing objectives well.

The process used to change and update the team selection process needs to be developed and defined. Currently this is a grey area with the Team Committee Chairman or the overall Competition Committee Chairman taking on these duties often with little outside input or process. The recommendation to make the emerging U.S. Team Committee responsible for managing the team selection process with input from the existing Rules Committee. The process would work in a similar manner to how the Rules Committee functions, polling U.S. competition pilots and providing advisory input to the Contest Chairman. In this way changes in team selection policy would have broad input from the competition pilots and the rules committee before being recommended for adoption as policy.

One of the critical documents that must be revised immediately is the existing funding scheme that is laid out in the current selection and funding document. See the appendices at the end of this document for a copy of this document. TTF 5 Team Funding by Ken Sorenson explores this thorny area and provides a good framework for additional definition by the U.S. Team Committee.

The overall selection document is overly complex which makes a simple process seem daunting and difficult to understand. Some work should be done to simplify the selection document while maintaining the current system intact.

All the selection criteria in the world are for nothing unless a team selection list is maintained and published in a timely manner. John Leibacher has taken on this responsibility and has done a wonderful job updating and publishing the team selection lists by class on the web. John has agreed to become the official team selection list manager for the U.S. Team Committee.

## Is it selection? Why Americans do not win more

There has been a good deal of discussion about why Americans do not win more world soaring championships and how this ties into the team selection process. First, the situation is not as dire as most make it out to be. In 1999 Karl Striedieck came within inches of winning the 26<sup>th</sup> World Soaring Championships in Bayreuth, Germany. In 2001, Gary Ittner did the same at the 27<sup>th</sup> South Africa Championships. If things would have gone just slightly differently for these pilots the world of competitive soaring would be talking about those, "Unstoppable Americans".

There are many factors that contribute to the USA not winning more championships. As in most complex problems there are several contributing factors and few easy answers or fixes.

In regard to the task force effort. There are things that can be addressed and fixed within the team world and things that are more structural and can't be fixed immediately - or at all. The task force effort is trying to address the things we can fix. All we can do is try and make the current situation better.

**WINNING IS HARD TO DO.** There is an almost magical set of circumstances that must come together to win at the worlds. Sustained brilliance in the flying plus a little good luck or the absence of bad are required to win. Typically there are 10 guys who are in this magic zone at the start of each worlds. The top five could have won if things would have been slightly different at some point on course. That is why the title of World Soaring Champion is so highly regarded. You can't buy your way in but if your team is unorganized, under funded and poorly staffed - then it's less likely to happen. That is what the task force is about - putting the teams in a place where good things are more likely to happen. Talk to George Moffat as he has done a lot of thinking about this.

**OUR WEATHER IS TOO GOOD.** We typically fly in weather that is not reflective of the places and day's worlds are typically won. We have little experience in the area, country or weather that wins championships.

**OUR TASKS ARE TOO SHORT.** If you want to select the best we should be flying tasks that 30%+ of the fleet lands out every day. It is not likely that many contestants nor the insurance companies would like this idea.

**OUR SPORT IS TOO SMALL.** We really only have 200 racing pilots in this country regardless of the seeding sheets with 500+ names on them. Beyond this there are only around 50 pilots in the US that are focused on winning a nationals. If we had 2,000 racing competition pilots in the US with strong regional and super tough nationals it would bring along more competitive pilots.

**WE HAVE LITTLE SOARING INFRASTRUCTURE.** Competitive soaring in this country is tough. We typically have to buy our own very costly gliders and train ourselves competitively over many years. In typical American fashion – we are on our own. In Europe there has been more of a soaring infrastructure that supports both the sport and the competitors. Pilots frequently borrow their clubs ships to fly in world competitions, there are good training programs in high performance gliders to take advantage of, etc. Several other countries have very active and aggressive programs to develop new soaring talent at the Junior level. The British have made a very deliberate effort in this area and it shows.

**WE HAVE NO TEAM ORGANIZATION.** US soaring has not done the work needed to get serious about the team, its organization, funding and policies in the past. Sure a lot of effort has been put into the various team programs over the years but there is no sustainable effort or organization in place. We tend to put teams together an adhoc, one shot manner. There has not been sustained team management or organization put in place to add much needed consistency to the "program".

**WE DON'T GET OUT MUCH.** Recent discussions with a German national champion are illustrative. When asked about an upcoming championships site he had competed at the sight several times! When asked about several other sites around Europe - he had flown and competed at all of them. The point is that most top pilots from Europe get around a lot to the different sites, they speak the languages, know the weather and are generally more comfortable in this environment than most Americans.

**WE DO NOT TEAM FLY.** The Europeans team fly as a matter of course. Recently when the winner of the German nationals was complemented on his recent win, edging out the current world champion by only a few points he expressed embarrassed, stating that they had been teammates and should have tied at the contest! There is a cry for Americans to team fly as the only way to beat the Europeans. It is not that simple. Personal flying style, personality, ego and other factors come into play. Forced team flying actually gets in the way of competitive excellence.

There are very negative effects that occur when you allow team flying at nationals including the creation of little clicks of pilots forming at the expense of the other contestants. At the world level if we can't team fly effectively lets pressure the IGC to get team flying removed from future WSC!

Does all this mean we should just pack it in and go home?

ABSOLUTELY NOT! We have pilots in this country that can win at the world level given the right circumstances. All that we are trying to do with the taskforce is to create a better, more sustainable runway from which to launch these pilots.

## Areas of Potential Changes to Team Selection

The following items are areas that current team selection policy might be changed to better reach the goals of the team. As part of the team taskforce project the following areas should be discussed and considered by the emerging U.S. Team Committee.

- A. American pilots aspiring to team membership should be encouraged to fly in European Championships as guests.
- B. Pre-World competitions are especially important. There should be some incentive built into the team selection process to attend the Pre-Worlds. As the ICG moves toward one pilot per class World Championships this pilot should be selected before the pre-worlds. The idea is to put the team position selected before the Pre-world championships up for grabs in the final year before the championships if the pilot selected early does not go to the PWC.  
  
Alternatively, given the value of attending the PWC, if the #1 pilot selected before the PWC decides not to go, the position should be offered to the #2 pilot. If the #1 or #2 pilot does not go then the position up would be up for grabs in the final year. The idea of rolling the pre-select slot to the final-select pool if neither #1 or #2 pre-select go. The only sticking point here is funding for the pre-select. This may have the effect of shifting the selection process to the final-select year, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. The only reason we went to a split selection was to send team members to the preworlds. We might even want to consider #3 pre-select if #1 and #2 can't go.
- C. The Funding and Selection policies should be split into two separate documents as per what has been done in the TTF process. Both selection documents are in need of revision.
- D. Change the base of analysis in selection to make it more understandable using the addition of prior scores. The argument is that we have too many 100 point pilots. The idea is simple take the guys score \* the year factor and then add the years together. Rankings would look like – AB 7345, CD 7334, EF 7324 instead of the wad of 100% pilots we have now.
- E. The Junior and Feminine classes have their own team selection criteria based on age and sex. These are very difficult to track at the end of the year. Step one is to capture birthday and sex data on the entry form then have WinScore updated to record birthdays and sex information. The score sheet should have some code for juniors and feminine such as an asterisk by the pilot's name.
- F. While the team selection process is relatively simple the current description is unnecessarily complex. The process is in need of a "simple language" explanation.
- G. Develop some mechanism that makes it increasingly difficult for a repeat team member who does poorly in several world championships from going again and again and again.

- H. When a WSC is held in the USA suspend the year prior selection for multi-pilot classes and make the PWC the 52% contest. All pilots with a realistic chance to make the team can enter the PWC.
- I. Long term if we are going to consistently win we need to go to a more professional team. We could select a coach such as Moffat and have a special contest for selecting the final team from pilots who qualify.

## Recommendations

- Essentially the current team selection process is working well and there is no cry to change the system.
- There is a need to develop a process for managing changes to the selection criteria.
- The current selection document needs to be separated from the team funding document and both are in need of updating.
- A simple language version of the selection process is needed
- Accurate and timely posting of the team selecting standings is important
- There are a number of fine tuning items that should be considered by the U.S. Team Committee.

# SSA US Team Funding and Selection Policies

Version 1.0

SSA Board Approved: April 2, 2001

## INTRODUCTION

This document is intended to represent the SSA US Team Funding and Selection Policies approved by the SSA Board of Directors for use of the Contest Committee and its corresponding US Team subcommittee.

## GLOSSARY

Following are the definitions of several terms used in the balance of this document:

<b>CFS</b>	Competition Fractional Score
<b>PWC</b>	Pre-World Contest
<b>SY</b>	A USST selection year. Preceding years will be referred to as SY-1, SY-2, etc.
<b>USNSC</b>	U.S. National Soaring Competition
<b>USST</b>	U.S. Soaring Team
<b>WGC</b>	World Gliding Championship
<b>WGCY</b>	The year of an upcoming WGC. WGCY-1 is the year preceding a WGC (Usually the year in which the associating PWC is held). The year before that will be WGCY-2, and so on.

## 1 FUNDING POLICIES

There are now multiple FAI sanctioned World Gliding Championship events hosting multiple FAI WGC classes in any given year. This combined with the mostly un-reliable nature of funding activity results leads to the following guidelines for funding pilot participation ant WGC events.

**1.1** The primary objective is to fully fund each pilot attending an FAI sanctioned WGC event. Each pilot will be expected to contribute an amount equal to what they would spend attending a USNSC. The amount a pilot must contribute will be determined by the US Team Committee and included in the Notification of Selection.

**1.2** If, after a budget analysis by the US Team Committee, the primary objective (1.1) is not possible the following policies will be implemented:

**1.2.1** All pilots attending a single FAI sanctioned WGC will be funded equally.

**1.2.2** At the time Notification of Selection to attend an FAI sanctioned WGC are sent to qualifying pilots the US Team Committee will announce the minimum per pilot funding for the event. This minimum will take into account travel costs to the event, as well as contest fees and expenses for each of the FAI WGC teams. The minimum designated funding for a WGC will be made available to the event Team manager for deposits and pre-paid expenses

**1.2.3** At the conclusion of the last competition in a year, the US Team Committee Chairman will examine its yearly USST expenses and income to reimburse properly accounted for and reasonable team related expenses to the full amount described above. Any shortage will be equally spread across all team members attending WGC events.

**1.3** Funding for PWC events will only be considered if the US Team budget indicates that all planned WGC events will easily be fully funded. Partial funding of PWC events will be determined on an ad-hoc basis by the US Team Committee.

**1.3.1** Potential PWC participants must apply to the US Team Committee for funding three months prior to the PWC.

**1.3.2** One month prior to the PWC, the US Team Committee Chairman will notify participants if, how much, and to whom funding will be provided in support of the PWC by the US Team Committee.

**1.3.3** US Team Committee funded PWC participants will be required to deliver a report to the USST regarding their experiences and conditions at the PWC.

## **2 CONTRIBUTIONS**

**2.1** Direct contributions made to support a particular pilot (through the SSA) will be used to fund that pilot before US Team Funds are used. Direct funding of an individual pilot through SSA is not encouraged. It is desired that funds be donated to the US Team Fund so that the above policies can be followed. Excess direct donation will be applied to the general US Team effort.

**2.2** Direct contributions made to support a WGC event (through the SSA) will be used to fund that event before US Team Funds are used. Direct funding of an individual team through SSA is not encouraged. It is desired that funds be donated to the US Team Fund so that the above policies can be followed. Excess direct donation will be applied to the general US Team effort.

**2.3** An important goal of the US Team Committee will be to increase the principal amount of the US Team Funds (Robertson, Woods, etc.) so that the revenue from these funds will eventually provide for full WGC pilot funding.

## **3 COMPETITION CLASSES**

Currently there are seven FAI classes. Pilot selection is using from the results from past USNSC competitions (details described later).

**3.1** The following table describes the US National Selection Class for each WGC/FAI class and the minimum number of entrants fo the results to be used in pilot selection.

<b>WGC Class</b>	<b>US National Selection Class</b>	<b>Minimums for official contest (US National</b>
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		<b>Rules)</b>
<b>Standard</b>	Standard	8 entrants
<b>15-Meter</b>	15-Meter	8 entrants
<b>18-Meter</b>	18-Meter	8 entrants
<b>Open</b>	Open	8 entrants
<b>Club</b>	Sport*	8 entrants
<b>World</b>	World	5 entrants
<b>Feminine</b>	All US FAI and Sport Class Nationals	Achieve a minimum of 60% of winner's score (best result)
<b>Junior</b>	All US FAI and Sport Class Nationals	Achieve a minimum of 60% of winner's score (best result)

Pseudo contestant results will be constructed for the Feminine and Junior classes and be used as data for the detailed pilot selection process (described later in this document).

#### **4 PILOT SELECTION POLICIES**

The USST members will be selected by the Contest Committee/US Team sub-Committee and approved by the SSA Board of Directors. The following considerations will be used in selecting the team members for each WGC event:

**4.1** Recent pilot performance in National and World competition.

**4.2** The size of the U.S. Soaring Team as defined by WGC organizers

**4.3** USST funding availability.

**4.4** The number of participants in each USNSC. If official USNSCs have not been achieved to support USST pilot selection, no pilots will be selected for participation in the corresponding WGC class event.

**4.5** \* Sport Class pilots who have been a contestant in a previous WGC contest (except Junior and Feminine events) are *not* eligible for selection to the US WGC Club Class team.

#### **5 DETAILED PILOT SELECTION PROCESS**

A Pilot Score is calculated to provide a means of ranking pilots in each Competition Class, and thus of selecting members of the USST. The Pilot Score is calculated from the pilot's results in designated USNSCs, PWCs and WGCs; each contest result is expressed as a Competition Fractional Score (CFS).

##### **5.1 Selection Schedule**

**5.1.1** For multiple entrant WGC classes: Selection of the pilots to attend a WGC will be done in two stages. The first selection will be done in year WGCY-2, upon conclusion of the year's USNSCs, at which time one pilot in the appropriate Competition Classes will be selected. The second selection will be done in year WGCY-1, upon conclusion of that year's USNSCs, at which time the second (and further, if applicable) pilot in the appropriate Competition Classes will be selected to the USST.

**5.1.2** For single entrant WGC classes: Selection of the pilot to attend a WGC in the appropriate Competition Classes will be done in year WGCY-1, upon conclusion of that year's USNSCs.

**5.1.3** If a USST position becomes vacant and must be filled prior to the next scheduled selection, a special selection is held using the previous ranking and procedures.

## **5.2** Competition Results

**5.2.1** In each competition that contributes to USST selection, a pilot's results are expressed as a Competition Fractional Score (CFS):

$$\text{CFS} = (\text{pilot's final point total}) / (\text{class winner's final point total})$$

In other words, the CFS represents a fraction of the winner's total score. For this purpose, the winner of a USNSC is considered to be the highest-scoring U.S. pilot; the winner of any other competition is simply the highest-scoring pilot.

**5.2.2** A pilot who does not participate in a competition has a CFS of zero for that competition.

## **5.3** Pilot Ranking

**5.3.1** In each USST selection year, pilots are ranked by Pilot Score in each Competition Class.

$$\text{PILOT SCORE} = \text{BP} + 52 * \text{X} + 48 * \text{Y}$$

Where the value of BP (Bonus Points) is calculated from the results of the most recent WGC:

- BP= 1.0 for 1<sup>st</sup> Place
- BP= 0.75 for 2<sup>nd</sup> Place
- BP= 0.50 for 3<sup>rd</sup> Place
- BP= 0.25 for 4<sup>th</sup> Place
- BP= 0 for any other result

If a WGC took place during the Selection Year:

X=the larger of A or E  
Otherwise;  
X=A

Y=the largest of A, B, C, D, E, or F (but Y must not be the same CFS as was used for X).

A=CFS from Competition Class's USNSC held in SY

B=CFS from Competition Class's USNSC held in SY-1

C=CFS from Competition Class's USNSC held in SY-2

D=CFS from most recent PWC

E=CFS from most recent WGC

F=CFS from next-to-most-recent WGC

**5.3.2** If a valid USNSC is not held in a given year, results from previous USNSCs are used in sequence. For example if a Competition Class has no valid USNSC in SY, the results of the USNSC held in SY-1 would be used for A, results from SY-2 would be used for B, and from SY-3 would be used for C.

**5.3.3** If two or more pilots have identical Pilot Scores, CFS values are examined in the following sequence to decide relative rank; X, E, A, B, C, D, E, F.

**5.3.4** Results from a WGC (CFS and Bonus Points) or a PWC can be used to contribute to a Pilot Score in the same Competition Class as flown in the WGC. Results from USNSCs are class-specific and can contribute only to a Pilot Score in the same Competition class as that in which they were obtained.

## **6 Pilot Eligibility**

**6.1** Only US Citizens and Resident Aliens can be members of the USST at any WGC.

**6.2** To be eligible for selection to the USST in a competition Class, a pilot must have a Pilot Score not less than the smaller of:

**6.2.1** 90% of the highest Pilot score in the class.

**6.2.2** The fifth highest Pilot Score in the class.

**6.3** FAI rules regarding the minimum pilot experience to attend a WGC will be followed. As of this document's date, these include:

### *ANNEX A to FAI SPORTING CODE SECTION 3*

**8.2.1** *A competitor must be a citizen or resident of the country of the entering NAC and satisfy the conditions of the FAI Sporting Code, General Section 3.8 on citizenship and representation, and must;*

- *hold a gold badge, or, hold a silver badge and have competed in at least two National Championships;*
- *have flown at least 250 hours as a pilot in command, of which at least 100 hours must be in sailplanes;*
- *hold an FAI Sporting Licence with a current FAI stamp;*
- *hold a Pilot Licence or equivalent document issued or endorsed by the authorities of the country in which the sailplane is registered, or of the country where the Championships take place;*
- *know, understand, and abide by the FAI Sporting Codes and the Rules and Regulations issued for the event.*

## **7 Pilot Selection**

**7.1** Selection of USST pilots is done as follows:

**7.1.1** First, the competition classes for a WGC event are ranked by the total number of contestants in the most recent three valid USNSCs. (For this purpose, the number of contestants is the number of pilots that receive non- zero scores at a USNSC.) Let C1 represent the class that ranks first by this method, C2 represent the class that ranks second, and C3 represent the class that ranks third, etc until all classes are covered.

**7.1.2** Next, pilots are selected for available USST positions.

- The first pilot selected is the eligible pilot with the highest Pilot Score in C1; the second pilot selected is the eligible pilot with the highest Pilot Score in C2;
- The third pilot selected is the eligible pilot with the highest Pilot Score in C3.
- Etc, until each class has been covered.
- This process repeats for multi-pilot classes as appropriate.

**7.1.3** This selection procedure continues until all USST positions for the WGC event are filled or no eligible pilots remain. If a point is reached where a class has no remaining eligible pilots, the process continues with the other classes as long as team positions and eligible pilots remain.

**7.2** A pilot is removed from a class's selection if:

**7.2.1** The pilot has already been selected as a member of the USST for any WGC event in the calendar year of the target WGC event. This includes any pilot who has received a separate specific invitation to participate (as is commonly extended to winners of the previous WGC).

**7.2.2** The pilot has qualified for selection in more than one class and has chosen to participate in a different class.

**7.2.3** The pilot is unable to or elects not to participate.

**7.3** In all cases, the remaining eligible pilots are ranked and selected as above.

**7.4** FAI rules regarding the number of pilots to attend a WGC in specific classes will be followed. As of this document's date, these include:

*ANNEX A to FAI SPORTING CODE SECTION 3\*

*7.3.1 In Championships with more than one class, each NAC may enter the number of pilots approved by the IGC and specified in the Local Regulations, but not more than two plus one reserve pilot in any class. A reserve pilot will replace a nominated pilot in the event of a withdrawal.*

*7.3.4 The current Champions may compete as additional members of their team in their respective classes.*

## **8 Notification of Selection**

**8.1** Each prospective U.S. Soaring Team pilot will be sent a Notice of Selection, and will be deemed to be formally selected to the USST when the pilot returns a signed copy of this Notice.

**8.2** The Notification of Selection will state the amount of the expected pilot contribution (1.1) and the minimum per pilot funding (1.2.2).

**8.3** A pilot who fails to return a signed Notice of Selection within 21 days of notification postmark will be deemed to have selected not to participate.

## **9 Provision for Non-Flying Team Coach**

**9.1** To encourage the participation of a competition pilot as a non-flying USST coach, a special provision is made. If due to such participation a pilot is unable to compete in a USNSC, that pilot may use the results of previous years' USNSCs in sequence to compute a Pilot Score. For example, if such a pilot misses a USNSC in SY-1, he can use a CFS obtained in SY-2 as if it had been obtained in SY-1, and the CFS from SY-3 for SY-2.

**9.2** The following restrictions apply to this provision:

**9.2.1** It applies only to a pilot formally appointed to a coaching position with the USST.

**9.2.2** It cannot be used to obtain a CFS that applies to a Selection Year (I.e. It cannot be used to supply value A in the Pilot Score formula above).

**9.2.3** It cannot be used to substitute for a CFS obtained at a USNSC in which the pilot actually participated.

END