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US Soaring Team Day Reports & Results



Opening Day -
Tuesday, December
18



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27th World Gliding Championships, Mafikeng, South Africa, December 18-31, 2001.

Day Report - December 18

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Update: Today was a tough opening day with difficult weather. Preliminarily it looks to be a full landout day for all classes. All classes flew Area Tasks. New report has the US Team doing well in Open class with Jim Payne winning the day with a 145.6 km flight and Ray Gimmey in third place with 134.9 km. In the 15-Meter class, with all pilots reported from Karl Striedieck moved to 6th with 90.6 km and Ittner 16th with 57km although no points have been awarded. In Standard, Doug Jacobs placed 7th and Chip Graner 8th. Again none of the Standard class has received a score.

The official site has excellent coverage for weather and tasking with scoring appearing as available.

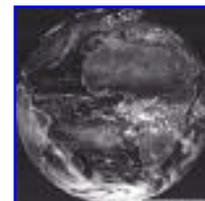
Bulletin 10, Tuesday, December 18 - John Good

Things are different today. Crews were at the field early to have the gliders ready prior to the 10:30 Pilots' Briefing. Not all the remains of the airshow were yet cleared away – a "caravan" (camper) blocked a couple of the US trailer tiedown spots, and the water hoses had been run over by trucks and had to be repaired. To make things interesting, we had low scudding clouds and a good 20-knot northeast wind – cardboard boxes and various trash were blowing across the ramp, and wings would not stay on wing stands. This made it challenging to rig, and I expect the flying will be no piece of cake either.

The weighing system is efficient here: There are three sets of scales on the three routes to the runway, and all gliders are weighed in the "tow-out" configuration. It takes less than a minute each day. But when a strong wind is blowing, it affects the scale reading profoundly. Today, with the LS-8's nose facing into a stiff breeze, the reading was 25 kg less than it should have been. I heard that some Open-class gliders were 100kg under their calm-weather weight. This would allow any pilot to "legally" overballast, and thus we have rather dubious weight control in winds like today's.



0300 GMT
12/18/02
[IR Satellite](#)



1200 GMT
12/18/02
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The sky looks rather grim and the forecast seems to match it. A trough lies to the west and is moving east. There are morning thunderstorms well to the southwest, and upper-level winds are already carrying their blowoff across the task area, which will at the very least dampen thermals. The Standard class launched first, at 12:45. The sky was basically gray, but a thinner area of high clouds to the west allowed some small cumulus to form, and despite some pessimistic predictions, early launchers were able to find one- or two-knot climbs to about 2800' AGL.

It's now 90 minutes after the start of launch, and tasks for all classes are open. The cumulus that formed under the thinner high clouds just west of the field have rapidly overdeveloped and we have moderate rain on the field. Despite this, the US pilots seem to be doing okay for now. Doug Jacobs has reported that he was able to start, skirt the rain, and connect with decent conditions to the southwest, on course for the first turn. No doubt this will be the initial strategy for all pilots. But this rain is likely to capture at least a few gliders, and it's most unfortunate that our forebodings about overdevelopment and rain should come true even before the first contest launches were complete.

At 3pm, we have no further word, and we're definitely at that time of day when no news is good news. The US pilots are out on course, beyond radio range, and at last report were doing fine. A few pilots have landed back at the field and attempted to re-start, and some breaks in the clouds may make this possible. But there are 70 pilots here and I'd bet you'd be hard pressed to find even one who believes that this is a good day to start late. A lot of crews are checking trailers and roadmaps just now.

At 3:20, Team Captain Gary Kemp's phone rang. It was Gary Ittner, reporting that he had landed safely about 45 miles southwest of Mafikeng. This is not likely to be the only outlanding today.

I'm going to file this report now, then try to add to it later, as more results become known.

18 December - Addendum - John Good

It was quite an evening at Mafikeng: of 70 pilots, 63 landed out and the rest returned to the field (some using their motor). The thunderstorms that were predicted to be forming to the southwest were there in force. Just one pilot (Alberto Kunath in Open Class) was able to reach the first turn.

The Open class demonstrated the value of their long wings – they were the only class in which more than 25% of pilots achieved 100km, the minimum for a valid contest day. The US did well, with Jim Payne taking third and Ray Gimmey fifth. Ray was among the few able to retrieve by motor, and so missed the big fun. The good news is that most landings were in beautiful large, flat agricultural fields. The bad news is that the entire area was plagued with thunderstorms, gust fronts, intense rain, hail, the occasional funnel cloud, and spectacular lightning displays.

Martha Jacobs and I fetched Doug, who landed about 95 km (by air) from Mafikeng – a good flight in the Standard class, though it will earn no points. The first hour's drive was on fairly good two-lane paved roads, though we were slowed down by hard rain that turned to intense rain and hail. We were down to 15 kph and wondering how long the windshield could withstand the battering, when it finally let up. We passed a number of trailers and saw many gliders in fields that the rain had turned to mud. Markku Kuittinen, a former World Champion from Finland, had apparently avoided the mud by landing on the (tolerably busy) road – we saw him at the edge of the pavement with a police car directing traffic, astride the fuselage and looking like a drowned rat. As we proceeded south the roads turned to dirt, at first fairly good then rather rutted. The good news was that there had been almost no rain in this area – the conditions we'd seen to the north would have quickly made these roads impassable. Yet we

took half an hour to do the final 15 km. Near Doug's field we saw Karl Striedieck and his crew, who had just arrived (he had a good flight in the 15-Meter class, which will also earn no points). Packing up the LS-8 went well. The farmer and his family were extremely friendly and helpful, not only allowing us to tow the glider to the edge of the soft field, but actually tramping down a route to the glider with the farm pickup truck (known locally as a "bakkie"). A local pair of ostriches watched from a safe distance. We had our eyes on a storm to the west as it moved closer, but it held off, and the disassembly was mercifully dry.

As we retraced our route back to paved roads, the gust front from the storm followed us. The sun setting behind it made a spectacular sight. We reached the pavement at last light, just as the storm overtook us. From there it was 90 minutes back to the field in occasionally moderate rain. During that 90 minutes we saw not less than 2000 lightning bolts, some of them close and intensely bright, in every possible shape and variety. Many times we thought we'd used up our vocabulary of exclamations, only to see something even more spectacular that simply could not be observed in silence. The longest period without a bright flash was perhaps 5 seconds, and there were few of those. If a movie attempted to depict a lightning storm this way, you would immediately dismiss it as a laughable caricature of reality.

The lightning was often bright enough to see by, and some of the sights it disclosed were a bit sobering. We were still seeing trailers heading out more than an hour after dark. There are more than a few gliders here who are sharing trailers, because shipping several gliders and just one trailer in a container can significantly reduce costs. I'll bet there was some serious re-evaluation of the wisdom of this strategy last night. Some pilots were depending on borrowed trailers, with all that this implies. (One end of a cellphone conversation, overheard at the field around 9:30 pm: "Are you saying the trailer is too short for the glider??") For the US Team, all

retrieves went well and we got to bed at a reasonable hour.

Tuesday, December 18 - Gary Kemp, U.S. Team Captain

Gary filed this on the run as it has been very busy day for him so far. "All of the 15 meter and Standard U.S. pilots have landed out, many others as well, very poor day with much cirrus and overcast. At this moment the Open Class U. S. pilots are still flying." More later!

Editor - Check out the competition. Visit the [German team](#), the [Canadian team](#), the [Dutch team](#), the [British team](#) and the [French team](#) as they all have excellent sites.




[Practice Day Reports](#)

USA Soaring Team Results 2001/2002

To catch up on all the news for the 2001 U.S. World Soaring Teams see the [US Team News](#) for the top finishers in each class plus the U.S. pilots final standings. See the U.S. [Team Archive](#) for team background since 1950. As part of the Archive tour see the [US Team History](#) page for a complete listing of US Teams since 1950 or the [World Champions](#) page for a complete listing of champions since 1937.

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