



SOARING SOCIETY OF AMERICA

THE OFFICIAL SITE OF THE SOARING SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

## USA SOARING TEAMS

- SSA Home
- Home
- About
- News
- Reports
- Open
- 18-Meter
- 15-Meter
- Standard
- Club
- World
- Junior
- Feminine
- Camps
- Press
- Gallery
- Committee
- Financials
- Calendar
- Funding
- Selection
- Organization
- Links
- Archive
- History
- Champions
- Site Updates
- Contest Results

US Team  
eBulletin  
**NEWS**  
Sign Up Here

## U.S. Soaring Team Day Reports & Results

### 2006 FAI Grand Prix

St. Auban, France, September 2 - 9, 2006



### Wednesday, September 6 - Day 4

#### John Good Reporting

Hazy, hot, stable air persists in the southern Alps. We woke today to dense fog that didn't start to lift until 10am. The good news is that the high mountains have enough heating and convection to produce strong lift and high cloudbases by mid-afternoon. The bad news is that it's 30 to 40 km from St. Auban to where these good conditions start, and covering that ground can be tricky indeed.



I'll confess that I was distracted from my jobs as crew and contest reporter today. Roland Stuck, who's here as the IGC Referee, offered me the chance to fly the ASG-29 prototype (German registration D-2929). You can be sure I carefully weighed the pros and cons of this before accepting. I was on the ground for the Grand

Prix launch, and got Doug Jacobs safely into the air. I was not available for his re-light, about which more later.

I can tell you that the ASG-29 is a beautiful machine. My decision to take no waterballast was correct – in the first 45 minutes of flight I saw no lift better than 1 m/s (200 fpm) and was quite happy when it was that good. I twice dug myself out from around 400m above the home airfield. Lots of other gliders were in the air, nearly all of which were struggling. The combination of 18 meters of span, low wingloading and good handling is just what's needed in these conditions. No doubt the 29 is a formidable high-speed machine when fully ballasted; today, it was never called on to do any speed above 150kph (and indeed not much of that).

I've mentioned how starting has been tough for Grand Prix pilots here. The scheme is supposed to involve all pilots getting high off tow and then before the appointed start time making their way to the area behind the start line. If lift were generous this would work, but it has rarely been so. The most spectator-friendly start location is just over the airfield, but this is a long way from the places where lift might be found early in the day. Pilots have had only modest success with this start scheme – take a look at the penalties (expressed in

#### REPORTS

- Latest Report
- [Sep. 1 - Arrival](#)
- [Sep. 2 - Practice](#)
- [Sep. 3 - Day 1](#)
- [Sep. 4 - Day 2](#)
- [Sep. 5 - Day 3](#)
- [Sep. 6 - Day 4](#)
- [Sep. 7 - Day 5](#)
- [Sep. 8 - Day 6](#)
- [Sep. 9 - Day 7](#)

#### WEB LINKS

[Official Web Site](#)

No team funds are used for Grand Prix events



seconds) that have been collected.



In response to the difficult condition, organizers have in the past two days chosen start points much closer to where early thermals are found, which is working better. But a pilot who can't climb off tow still has a huge problem as the start time approaches. Doug was in this position today, and dealt with it by

pulling out the divebrakes and landing just before the task was opened. The rules specify that after the start a pilot can be towed into the start area and can start right after tow release. The time required for a tow means that by this method you'll be starting some five to seven minutes late. But when the alternative is trying to climb 500 meters at perhaps 0.3 m/s, the re-light looks like a smart choice. Doug still had lots of trouble connecting with the good lift north of home, but managed to do so and wound up 4th for the day.

His electronic problems of yesterday remain a mystery. It turns out he had on board three independent GPS-recording devices: 2 loggers and the mobile-phone-based Vpos tracking unit. The first two of these have in common only the fact that they are powered by the same battery (which after the flight was found to have no problems at all); the Vpos tracker has its own power source. All three of these devices stopped recording his position – not at exactly the same time, but within minutes of each other. This sort of thing might be explainable as some sort of local interference (though other gliders in the area didn't have problems). But the really strange thing is that all three devices failed to re-acquire navigation information for the rest of the flight (some 45 minutes). Naturally, all three worked fine today.

Today's winner was again Didier Hauss, who once again showed that his knowledge of soaring in the southern Alps is not of yesterday. His major success was to avoid the serious waste of time that most of his competitors suffered after the start. Tilo Holighaus was perhaps the outstanding example: in the first 90 minutes of his flight he managed to cover around 20 kilometers – a speed that a moderately accomplished jogger could manage. Tilo knows this area well – he has been here nearly every year since 1989. Yet he is something of a tyro compared to the local talent – Eric Napoleon admits to something over 10,000 (!) hours of motorless flight among these hills and mountains.

We've done a reasonably good job of sampling the local restaurants. Dinner tonight (in perfect weather) was at an outdoor table among chestnut trees in a small village on the way to the town of Digne ("Dean"), perhaps 20 minutes northeast of here. This was Tiro's recommendation, as it was a favorite of his father Klaus (whom we continue to miss). Two nights ago we made our way to Mallefougasse, where the best-regarded restaurant is, somewhat incongruously, run by a German lady. We've also had memorable food in St. Auban, and in the nearby village of Peyruis. None of these meals has been particularly expensive - \$25 to \$30 per person including wine has been about the top.

The advantage of eating in Haute Provence is due to the fact that there's not enough tourism here – no restaurant can succeed without appealing to the locals, who are spoiled by the quality of ingredients

and the way they are prepared. The fruits and vegetables here have to be some of the best in the world. Cheese, as I've mentioned, is off the scale. The local supermarket offers perhaps 100 different types of wine; with prices range from \$3 (still eminently drinkable) to around \$20 per bottle, with most in the \$5 to \$7 range.

- *John Good*

Copyright 1997-2006 Soaring Society of America