
US Region 7 Soaring Contest

May 29 to June 4, 2005

Albert Lea, Minnesota

by Paul Remde

We had a wonderful soaring contest this year in Albert Lea, Minnesota. The weather was good, but not as good as we've had for previous contests. We managed to fly 4 out of 7 days and had a very safe and fun week. A few of the days had very strong lift and good, well spaced clouds while other days found us climbing under overcast cloud shelves and trying to glide home through dark skies and rain. Seventeen pilots flew in the Sports Class and 5 pilots battled for the top spots in the Standard Class. I encouraged many new cross-country soaring pilots to join us for their first soaring contest. It was fun to see their skills grow as the week progressed! It was also a treat to watch the experienced and successful competition pilots such as Chip Garner, John Seaborn, Bob Epp, Ron Clarke and Herbert Kilian battle for the top positions. Competitors joined us from Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and New Mexico.

One fun aspect of the contest was that there were four two-seat gliders competing. Several soaring pilots acted as co-pilots in the two-seaters and were introduced to contest soaring while flying safely with experienced competition pilots – what a fantastic learning experience! Dick Andrews and Fred Hewitt generously made their beautiful DG-1000 available for Chip Garner to fly and raise money for the USA Soaring Team. Chip flew in the back seat and guests made donations to the USA Soaring Team for the opportunity to fly in the front seat. I was fortunate to fly with Chip on Day 2. Chip was fun to fly with, friendly and generous in sharing his knowledge. He talked through a lot of his decision making as we flew and I learned much from his experience. A total of \$1,250 was raised for the USA Soaring Team. Thank you Dick, Fred and Chip for making this possible! Dick Andrews brought the Minnesota Soaring Club's ASK-21 and made the front seat available to club members. I was fortunate to fly with Dick on Day 3. Dick is a very good contest pilot and a lot of fun to fly with. Don Ingraham of Cross Country Soaring, Inc. brought his lovely Grob 103 down from Faribault to compete. He made the front seat available to friends and customers. Matt Michael brought his IS-28B2 Lark two-seater up from Iowa and shared the week with Michael Graves. It was neat to see all the two-seaters competing and especially cool to see all the "passenger" pilots get introduced to competition soaring.

Charlie Spratt was scheduled to be our Competition Director but unfortunately he was unable to join us. Since I could not find anyone else to do the job I acted as both the Contest Manager and Competition Director. I was very busy but had a great time. At Charlie's recommendation I invited Tom Pressley to join us from Texas as the Scorer. He did a fantastic job and his volunteer spirit and technical skills were greatly appreciated.

The Albert Lea community was friendly and supportive as always. Airport Manager Jim Hanson was awesome. Not only did he make the airport and a nice hangar available to us, but he also hosted a terrific wine tasting party at his house and opened the Elks Lodge to us for dinner on Thursday! Thank you Jim!

The contest was run very efficiently thanks to hard work and great organization by Operations Director Scott Elhardt. I received many compliments on the well run flight line every day. Eric Strandjord was our I.T. expert and had a wireless network up and running on the practice day. That was extremely useful for weather updates. He and Tom Chrisfield went way beyond the call of duty in regard to awards. They handed out paper awards to the top 3 finishers in every class every day. Thanks to Mike Newman and his camera the awards even included photos of the pilot with his glider – a very nice touch that made the contest more fun. Tom Chrisfield also acted as the Weighing Coordinator – well done Tom. Thank you Margaret Kuhfeld, Pat Volhaber and Carolyn Finegan for all your help running the office, retrieve phones and flight line record keeping. Countless other volunteers helped make this contest possible. I would especially like to thank Leda Newman for the awesome cookies that appeared every morning! Thank you also to Mike and Colleen Finegan for organizing the dinner on Sunday and paying for the dinner drinks and Monday morning breakfast.

Our outstanding towpilots did a very professional job of bringing us to the lift. We appreciate the generous donation of their time and the use of their towplanes.

- Linda Copley, Husky, Chicago Glider Club
- Mike Meyer, Socata Rallye, Cross Country Soaring, Inc.
- Geoff and Logan Weck, Pawnee
- Lee Bradshaw, Husky

Other fun events included the Wine Tasting Party at Jim Hanson's house on Saturday, a "fish boil" in the hangar on Sunday evening, a picnic at Lakeside Park on Tuesday, bonfire at the airport on Wednesday and dinner at the Elks Lodge on Thursday.

Pre-Contest Regatta

The Minnesota Soaring Club hosted a fun pre-contest regatta and cross-country camp at Stanton Airfield the week before the contest.

Practice Day, Saturday, May 28

The weather was sketchy for the practice day. Many gliders were launched before isolated rain showers came through. It was a great practice day for pilots, crews and contest volunteers even though no tasks were flown.

Day 1, Sunday, May 29

The weather was quite good on Sunday. Both classes flew a Turn Area Task to Mapleton City and Owatonna Airport with 15 mile radii at the turnpoints and a 2 hour minimum. The nominal distance was 96 miles but pilots flew as far as 135 miles. Bob Epp took first place in the Standard Class with Herbert Kilian in 2nd and Mike Shakman in 3rd. In the Sports Class John Seaborn won the day in his Ventus 2B followed by Chip Garner and co-pilot Steve Bowen in a DG-1000 with Ron Ridenour close behind in his Nimbus 3. Eight gliders landed out or came home with less than the minimum distance. Almost all of the landouts were uneventful. Dick Andrews and Donzatta Strandjord landed the ASK-21 in a nice field but unfortunately they were greeted by an unpleasant farmer – to say the least.

Day 2, Monday, May, 30

The day started with weak lift but ended quite strong. The clouds looked the best to the North so that was where most pilots spent the majority of the day. It was a wonderful soaring day! The Standard Class was sent on an assigned task to Faribault and Church for a distance of 193 miles. Everyone made it around with some very tight scores. Herbert Kilian won the day with a speed of 67 mph, but it was not enough to take 1st place overall from Bob Epp who finished 2nd for the day. Gene Rinke placed 3rd for the day. The Sports Class was assigned a Modified Assigned Task with one assigned turnpoint at Owatonna and a minimum task time of 3 hours. John Seaborn won the day with a flight of 227 miles at a handicapped speed of 63 mph and held on to his 1st place position in the overall standings. Ron Clarke took 2nd place for the day and moved up from 5th to 3rd place overall. Chip Garner and I finished in 3rd place for the day and kept Team DG-1000 in 2nd place overall.

Day 3, Tuesday, May 31

The weather looked pretty bleak as we headed out to the grid on Tuesday. The sky overhead and to the South was overcast, however it looked great about 20 miles North of Albert Lea. The task selected for both classes was a Modified Assigned Task with one required turnpoint at Dodge Center and a minimum time of 3 hours. We launched two sniffer gliders as a few cumulus clouds appeared under the overcast. They reported pretty good lift so we started the launch in an effort to get the gliders out on course before the overcast moved in further. I flew in the ASK-21 with Dick Andrews and was surprised to find decent lift under the overcast. When the gate opened everyone with a fair amount of altitude headed out on course ASAP. When we got to the sunshine the lift was excellent. The tough decision for the day was deciding when to head home. The weather near Albert Lea was deteriorating. Dick and I were unable to make it back to Albert Lea in the ASK-21 but 10 gliders did make it home. In the Standard Class Herbert Kilian moved up to first place with a flight of 206 miles and a speed of 63 mph. Jeff Russell finished in 2nd place for the day and moved up to 3rd overall. Bob Epp finished in 3rd for the day and 2nd overall. In the Sports Class Chip Garner and co-pilot J. D. Teter made it home with a very low final glide and finished in 1st place for the day and moved into 1st place overall. John Seaborn landed a mile short of Albert Lea and finished in 6th place for the day and fell from 1st to 2nd place overall. Ron Ridenour finished in 2nd place for the day and 4th place overall. Eric Bluhm finished in 3rd place for the day in his HP-18. This was Eric's first soaring contest – well done!

Rest Day, Wednesday, June 1

The weather forecast showed very little chance of flying so we decided to take the day off. I offered complimentary SeeYou and Glide Navigator II training classes in the hangar which were well attended. It was very nice having Chip Garner (Glide Navigator II author and competition pilot extraordinaire) contribute to the Glide Navigator II training.

Day 4, Thursday, June 2

It was very windy on Thursday and the weather looked questionable, but we were determined to fly. It turned out to be our last contest day. The Standard Class was tasked with a Modified Assigned Task with one required turnpoint at Osage, IA. Jeff Russell and Herbert Killian tied for first place for the day with flights of 184 and 174 miles respectively and a speed of 56 mph. Herb kept his 1st place position overall and Jeff moved up to 2nd in the cumulative ranking. Bob Epp landed out and finished in 4th

place for the day and 3rd place overall. Gene Rinke finished in 3rd place for the day and 4th place overall. The Sports Class was assigned a Turn Area Task with turnpoints at Le Roy City (25 mile radius) and Mason Muni. (21 mile radius). Everyone in the Sports Class made it home. John Seaborn won the day with a distance of 197 miles and a raw speed of 66 mph. But it was not enough to pass Chip Garner and Team DG-1000. Chip and co-pilot Eric Strandjord finished in 2nd place for the day and 1st place overall. Dick Andrews and co-pilot Dale Erickson in the ASK-21 finished in 3rd place for the day and 8th place overall. Ron Clarke came in 4th for the day and 3rd overall. My favorite memory of the day was watching Leon Zeug fly his Ka-6E with a long neon orange ribbon attached to the top of the rudder. The streamer made it all the way around the task with Leon. It looked just like the ribbons you see behind the 3D computer modeled gliders in SeeYou and StrePla flight review software – cool! It was also fun to hear the crowd cheer at the finish line when they saw Laura Hohanshelt finish in her Ka-6E. It was her first contest finish and we were all rooting for her. Another interesting tidbit was the amount of attention Mike Shakman received after his lovely landing at a nearby airport. Someone became convinced that he had crashed so Mike was welcomed by a wide assortment of emergency, police and newspaper folks.

On Friday our weather person Mike Shakman announced that the chance of flying on Friday or Saturday was pretty close to 0% so everyone packed-up and headed home. Before leaving, John DeRosa treated many of us to his thorough and well done presentation on glider electronics. After that it was amazing how quickly our close little community disbursed.

Many excellent digital photos were taken by contest volunteers and made available to competitors along with flight logs on sets of 2 CDs. Thank you to Mike Newman, Eric Strandjord, and Scott Elhardt for adding your photos to the ones I captured.

I really enjoyed the week of soaring spent with a fun, friendly and supportive group of soaring enthusiasts. Many miles were flown on days that didn't look like cross-country days and of course there were some exciting off-field landing stories shared. The new contest pilots learned a great deal and the experienced contest pilots freely shared their knowledge with the rest of us. I can't imagine a better contest!

We are hoping to host the US Open Class and 18m Class Nationals in Albert Lea in 2007 combined with a regional contest. With such a wonderful soaring site, friendly and well organized volunteers and great spring soaring weather it promises to be a contest to remember.

Score sheets from each contest day are available here:
<http://www.cumulus-soaring.com/contest.htm>

Rank	Score	ID	Name	Glider
1	3599	J7	Herbert Kilian	LS-8
2	3230	TZ	Jeff Russell	LS-4, LS-4a
3	2942	OE	Robert Epp	Discus 2B
4	2654	EA	Gene Rinke	LS-8
5	2076	SH	Mike Shakman	ASW-24

Rank	Score	ID	Name	Glider
1	3238	FH	Chip Garner and Team	DG-1000 20m
2	3103	A8	John Seaborn	Ventus 2B
3	2917	ZA	Ron Clarke	Ventus 2C 18m
4	2821	1LB	Ron Ridenour	Nimbus 3 22.9m
5	2662	RS	Marian Wajda	PW-5 Smyk
6	2398	7Z	Eric Bluhm	HP-18
7	2274	US	Tom Kuhfeld	PW-5 Smyk
8	2204	MN	Richard Andrews and Team	ASK-21
9	2106	TT	John Harrison	ASW-20
10	1906	M9	Christophe Cooper	Ventus B
11	1891	RT	Leon Zeug	Ka-6E
12	1590	67	John DeRosa	DG-101G
13	1558	CN	Michael Finegan & Alan Benfell	PIK-20B
14	1493	XS	Don Ingraham and Team	G-103A Twin II
15	1481	WBY	Matt Michael & Michael Graves	IS-28B2
16	832	3J	Laura Hohanshelt	Ka-6E
17	727	GB	Tomasz Rogacki	SZD-41A Jantar Std