

## **SSL State Thermal Glider Championship**

Sixteen pilots entered the event over the weekend September 19/20. Five arrived at the field Friday afternoon to have some practice, and then the event proper started just after 9:30am Saturday. The forecast indicated a NW wind direction so the winch lanes were set in that direction but for most of the morning we were launching with a crosswind coming from the SW.

At 12:30 the group decide to leave the winches where they were, so we headed off to enjoy one of Terry Clayton's BBQ lunches. We were back at the pits early and the breeze looked to be settled in a SW direction so everyone decided it was time to move. We had some time up our sleeve so we set about moving all the winches and other gear to launch towards the SW. We were no sooner settled and ready to go and the wind moved back to the NW where it stayed for the rest of the day.

We completed Round 8 at about 4:30pm after having launched cross wind all day. The flying was fairly uneventful with only a few line breaks and minor incidents resulting in some model damage all of which was repairable.

The draw was done using teams of 2 so we could fly 3 heats per round. Those that were not flying did the line retrievals. It also meant that the newcomers (of which there were 5) could be paired with an experienced flyer. The format worked successfully with only a couple of time-outs to repair lines etc.

The wind averaged around 20-25 kph all day, and the temperature probably hovered in the low twenties. In other words, very pleasant flying conditions. The thermal activity was fairly typical of Milang. Some real boomers, some small low energy thermals and a few periods of dead air.

A large group (those staying in the area overnight) met for dinner at the Milang Hotel. There was a lot of discussion and banter – very enjoyable.

Sunday morning dawned as another lovely Spring day with no breeze and warm sunshine. Everyone was ready to go early so we started the first heat of round 9 just before the scheduled 9:30 start time. The first 30 minutes or so was dominated by a large dark cloud that dropped the temperature and increased the wind speed. Once that passed the rest of the day was pleasantly warm with lots of cloud streets moving slowly across the field from the NW. We got the winch lanes right.

We completed 6 full rounds by 1:30pm – 15 minutes over the scheduled finish time. The morning saw the same mix of boomer thermals and dead conditions with several heats seeing all pilots re-launch.

There were a few more line breaks during the day and Mark Stone had a nasty hook up on launch but got out of it with some easily repairable damage to his Nyx, which he had been flying extremely well up to that point.

Michael Abraham who was in the top 5 overnight had a test flight before we started and fluttered an elevator on his new Evolution, which put him out of the comp as it was his only model.

The newcomers had mixed success. Bill Kent, who was making his return to gliding competition after some 30 years, had a great time flying his 2m Fling. Mark Stone flew consistently well apart from the mishap during Sunday morning. Brian Locket struggled to get his Baudis Infinity sorted out but had some good launches on Sunday morning. Brad Merryweather had some setup issues with his Tragi 705 early on Saturday but then settled into some consistent flying. Robert Gunn struggled all weekend with his Tragi in turns but did not realise until after the event that he just needed some left aileron trim.

The steep learning curve involved in this event was appreciated by all the newcomers. Thermal Gliding involves a lot of equipment (winches, turnarounds, count down clocks, count up clocks, winch line, parachutes etc.), has a range of flying phases requiring different skills (launching, thermal hunting, thermal turning, precision landing, descending quickly from height etc.) and requires constant attention and decision making (should I go left or right, was that lift I just flew through, should I circle left or right, when should I commit to a landing approach, should I relaunch etc.)

Also back to competitive flying was Paul Moorfield after a 5 year stint working in Indonesia where there were no gliding competitions at all.

There were a few extra bodies to help during the two days. Bill Kent brought his nephew James along to see what it was all about. He was quickly co-opted into line retrieval and other duties.

Peter White was accompanied by wife Kerry and son Tony who did their fair share of line retrievals and other work to support Peter's flying.

Deb Abraham did a sterling effort keeping the heats moving and recording all the scores. Final results were ready within about 30 minutes of the final round being completed.

After a superb roast chicken and salad lunch, SSL president Mark Stone made presentations to all the participants. Everyone received a Fasta Pasta meal voucher, and a gift voucher from Modelflight. Sixth place and twelfth place received a new JR 171 wing servo.

The top placed first timer (Mark Stone) and the top three place-getters overall (Darrel Blow 1<sup>st</sup>, Greg Potter 2<sup>nd</sup> and Jamie Nancarrow 3<sup>rd</sup>) were awarded a set of 4 etched wine glasses.

The final results after 14 rounds (which all but three fliers completed):

Place	Name	Score	Percentage
1	Blow, Darrel	11900	100.00
2	Potter, Greg	11857	99.64
3	Nancarrow, Jamie	11594	97.43
4	Chabrel, Nick	11475	96.43
5	Whitfield, Garry	11373	95.57
6	Stone, Mark	10499	88.23

7	McDougall, Jim	10361	87.07
8	Moorfield, Paul	9832	82.62
9	Blanchard, John	9369	78.73
10	Pring, Mal	9363	78.68
11	Merryweather, Brad	9349	78.56
12	White, Peter	8937	75.10
13	Abraham, Michael	7326	61.56
14	Gunn, Robert	6915	58.11
15	Lockett, Brian	6870	57.73
16	Kent, Bill	3534	29.70

All entrants were happy with the 2 day format for this event.

Special thanks to Terry Clayton for catering lunches for everyone, to Jamie Nancarrow for providing prizes for everyone, to Robert Gunn for organising the trophies, for acquiring the meal vouchers and helping me setup the field on both days, to Deb Abraham for being CD and recording the scores and to all the non-fliers who pitched in and helped wherever needed.

Also a big thank you to all the entrants who conducted themselves in a highly sportsmanlike manner for the whole event. There was not one cross word all weekend.

Greg Potter  
SSL Event Organiser