



# United States Soaring Team Task Force

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## Topic – 11 Team Preparation

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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 Preparation

### Purpose & Goal

Preparation for world soaring championships has a direct impact on the final result. Disorganized unprepared pilots and teams have little chance. Soaring teams that are well organized and ready to go on the first day of competition are in a much better position to do well and win. The purpose and goal of adequate preparation is to insure U.S. teams arrive at the contest site with the pilots, crews, and equipment ready to win.

### Philosophy & Discussion

Preparation for world soaring championships is serious business with a very direct impact on the final result. Poor preparation can doom a championship effort before the flying starts.

World Championships are not just big nationals. They happen in distant lands, with new languages, food and culture. Championships attract better, more prepared pilots and teams, and typically involve hundreds of small organizational details each having some small impact on the overall outcome. You can count on other competitive teams being fully prepared and ready to win. Good preparation starts a year or more before the championships and takes dedicated hard work on the part of the team captain pilots, crews and organizers.

Soaring teams and pilots that are well organized, relaxed and ready to compete without distraction on the first day of competition are in a much better position to do well and win at world championships. Poor preparation can build the stress level to unnecessarily high levels.

Of course winning is the ultimate goal of any competitive activity. But a focus on winning is too simplistic an approach. Winning is a by product of doing lots of things right or at least better than the competition. Because of their complex nature, world championship competition happens on two levels – the organizational level and the pilot level. A key element is adequate team preparation.

The championships will have their share of challenges (is the radio supposed to smoke like that?) with out having to deal with self inflicted problems (where is the radio?) as a result of shoddy preparation. Being adequately prepared is key to winning World Soaring Championships.

The Europeans, because many championships are relatively local, face far fewer organizational and logistical challenges. The cure for this geographic challenge is good U.S. team preparation.

Teams are often faced with reinventing the wheel when preparing for world soaring championships. Historically the most experienced team captains and supporters burn out or have other commitments and take their critical knowledge with them – leaving the team well down the championship learning curve.

Going to world championships unprepared short changes the contributors who will be helping to pay the team's way, the other competitors who are expecting U.S. pilots to be in the thick of things and the domestic soaring community who want to see competitive supremacy.

## Components of A Well Prepared Team

There are several critical components involved with preparing a U.S. team to win at international championships.

- **Team Captain**

The team captain is primarily responsible for preparing the team to compete internationally. The team captain's support organization includes the dedicated help of the pilots, crews and U.S. Team Committee. The experience level of team captains is critical. Good preparation involves the accurate prediction of future needs. Captains with little experience at world championships and possessing only a passing knowledge of competition soaring face a very steep learning curve. The U.S. Team Committee, Team Document Binder and the Team Task Force documents will be a very great help. Captain's with several championships under their belt know what to expect and can prepare for the unseen eventualities.

- **Dedication and Priorities**

The primary obligation for team captains, pilots, crew and is full personal commitment to the championship effort to accomplish the team objectives. This means that there is no room for prostration and giving less than 110%. This attitude is especially important when preparing for championship competition.

- **Time**

The more time a team has to prepare for championships the better. There should be no hesitation in selecting a team captain before the pre-world event.

- **Communication**

Sometimes it's all about communication. Team captains need to communicate with team members frequently. Each team member including crews should have e-mail and web access. Team Captains must follow the critical team bulletins published by the championship organizers and collect the information from team members.

- **Experience**

Pre-worlds are about more than the flying as they provide the team with an opportunity to get valuable experience with the site and the geography.

So much of championship soaring is mental and if you're not at ease with the culture and country it's hard to get into the winners circle. Pre-Worlds also provide an opportunity to take the initial logistical steps such as accommodations and transportation. A pre-worlds report is a mandatory part of attendance. See USST Doc 300 How to write a Pre-Worlds Report.

- **Organizational Resources**

Historically team captains have had very few resources to draw on when preparing for championships. The objective of the U.S. Team Committee is to provide a brain trust of knowledge and resources that can be used to further the goals of U.S. soaring teams. Use this resource.

- **Other Resources**

Out of the Team Task Force project came a set of US team documents that incorporate the tips, tricks and suggestions from the top team captains and pilots including Jim Payne, who has managed the team five times and been a team pilot. These critical documents are kept in the Team Binder and will be available on the secure portion of the U.S. Team web site in the future.

Here is a sample of what is included in the 20 plus resource documents in the team binder.

USST 355	JP	Pilot Best Practices	What pilots need to do to prepare	MS Word & PDF	Binder & Web
USST 350	JP	Captain Best Practices	What team captains need to do to prepare	MS Word & PDF	Binder & Web

USST		Team Policy, Procedures and Guidelines	Official team policy document	MS Word & PDF	Binder & Web
USST		Team Task Force Report	Team Task Force Report	MS Word & PDF	Binder & Web
USST	WJS	US Team Equipment and Supplies	List of equipment and supplies available for use by teams.	MS Word & PDF	Binder & Web
USST	DJ	US Team Captain Checklist	A checklist of things that need attention as a Team Captain	MS Word & PDF	Binder & Web
USST	WJS	Best Practices – All the little stuff	A comprehensive list of US Team best practices	MS Word & PDF	Binder & Web
USST	WJS	Team Checklist before departing for WSC			
USST	WJS	How to Budget for World Teams			

## Summary & Recommendations

Team preparation is a key factor in establishing a winning effort at world soaring championships and needs to be emphasized.

All team members must commit fully to team preparation and assist at the 100% level

The team captain holds overall responsibility for team preparation and is key to this effort

There are a number of resources available to assist in preparing for World Soaring Championships.