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## US Soaring Team Day Reports & Results



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

### Day Report - December 17, 2001

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## Bulletin 9, Monday, December 17 - John Good

The Opening Ceremonies are now complete and the airshow is underway. We've had parachutists and glider aerobatics; four South African Air Force T-6's are now rumbling around the sky, trailing much smoke. Many more acts will follow.

As you might expect, the morning on which all teams would march before the assembled spectators to listen to more than an hour of oratory was much the hottest one we've yet seen, with an entirely blue sky. The temperature today should reach 100, and the soaring conditions would likely be the best so far, though no gliders will be flying. Still, it's a good omen for the contest.



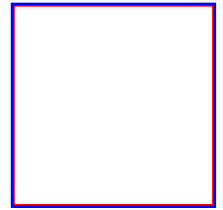
The US Team, just after Opening Ceremonies

In general, temperatures have been in the low 90's, and there have been clouds every day, often

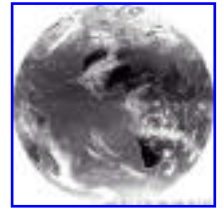
widespread. Humidity has been reasonably high, but not savage. Complaints about the heat are frequently heard, but by the standards of soaring sites this is rather moderate -- indeed, entirely too moderate for best lift. Compared to my previous World Gliding Contest (January 2001 in Gawler, Australia), this is nothing -- in Gawler, a cool day was 105, and we saw at least two that reached 115. So you won't find me among the complainers here.

The T-6's have landed and a giant Puma military helicopter is spooling up.

Last night we had a welcoming dinner in the briefing hangar, and it was quite an event. There were tables to accommodate



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perhaps 250 people, and on stage was a truly excellent African dance group. Apparently, the festivities lasted until past midnight – not all pilots appear the share the US Team's belief in an early-to-bed strategy (perhaps they were looking for one last chance to carouse before battle is joined). What the resident Barn Owl made of this can only be guessed.

A man is now dangling 200' below the Puma and 20' above the ground, as it flies slowly past the crowd.

One of the decorations at the welcoming dinner was a famous South African glider, the BJ-2. This is a mid-1960's design that employed Fowler flaps to give the pilot the ability to change the effective wing area – a very advanced design for its time. As I was admiring it, a fit-looking elderly man smiled at me and said, "I hope you like it, because I designed it." It was Fritz Johl. He and Pat Beatty produced a number of gliders in the BJ series, all of them real innovations. Both he and the BJ-2 look remarkably well. It's notable how young our sport really is, and how accessible are its pioneers.

A couple of Pitts biplanes are flying past the crowd about 40' in the air; one inverted.



Yesterday proved to be a reasonably good soaring day that ended early. Though it looked for a while as if only

Ray Gimmey and Jim Payne with their long wings would get home, in fact all but one of the US pilots made it. Chip Garner didn't, but was able to dig himself out of a hole to reach an airstrip about 35 miles



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south, for an easy aerotow retrieve. A good many pilots didn't complete the last leg, and several trailers hit the road. Jim Payne feels that in this weather Mafikeng is a good site for the old strategy of "Start early, stay high, pray for rain" to which Jackie adds "And given the past week's weather, you may not have to pray too hard." It is certainly true that there have been few days on which a get-home-late strategy would have been a good one.

A Russian Yak-3 with an Allison V-12 engine is doing a fair imitation of a P-51, both in sound and maneuvers.

The turnout for the airshow isn't huge – perhaps 800 people. They are certainly enthusiastic. In Africa, an alternative to clapping or cheering is ululation – a loud, fairly high-pitched noise made while rapidly moving the tongue up and down. It seems to be a specialty of women, can be heard a great way off and makes a striking impression.

An Extra 300 is entertaining the crowd with a routine that includes plenty of tumbles, spins and snap rolls. A German bystander describes a tow using an Extra 300: an ASH-25 with two pilots and water has a ground roll of 120 feet, followed by a 1500 fpm rate of climb.

There are plenty of food vendors here, doing a fine business. With the current absurd exchange rate, everything is a great bargain for us. A popsicle known as a "Fruity Lick" is under 10 cents. A salad from a moderate salad bar is around 70 cents (though the dressings are a trifle strange, consisting of a choice of ketchup or mustard).

The "Car and Plane Race" has apparently concluded the first round of the airshow (all acts will be repeated this afternoon). The race was from a standing start, and

actually had three entrants: a Pitts biplane, a car and a motorcycle. As they raced out of sight down the nearly 15,000' runway, the Pitts was gaining on the car, but the motorcycle had a couple hundred yards on both of them.

I think I'll now conclude today's report. The feel of Mafikeng will change quite a bit tomorrow, as the contest begins in earnest. Some hopes will be realized; many will not.

In some respects, the US is a second-tier country here. We don't invest anything like the time and effort that teams like Germany, France, Italy and England do. This has something to do with finances, but much more with the different way Americans approach our sport. We are independent types spread across a large country with little interest in the kind of practice-intensive, highly disciplined team flying that has proven effective in recent World contests.

But even without this, I like our chances. There's no doubt that we have six good pilots in six competitive gliders. This is not a "local knowledge" site like the French Alps, where only those with hundreds of hours of experience have any chance. Gliders, pilots and crews are ready. We'll see what the next two weeks will bring.

(I was wrong – the concluding act is close-formation flying by a Sea Fury and a Spitfire, against an African sky half-filled with beautiful cumulus clouds. Glorious.)

### **Bulletin 9, December 17 - Gary Kemp, US Team Captain**

We had to be at the airport by 8:30 for the opening ceremonies. It very quickly became apparent that this day was going to be cooking, I am sure at least 90 degrees by "Parade Time". Anyway, we



lined up and had a little grade six girl in her uniform to carry our sign, we also had our flag in front of us, we walked out and stood around the parade ground for quite some time listening to speeches, awards, soldiers passing in review, parachutists jumping in with the South Africa flag. We kept our little standard bearer comfortable with a team hat, Ruth Gimmey held an umbrella over her. She didn't pass out, the little girl next to us did and Stepanie (our little girl) said, she does that all the time. Doug Jacobs bought her ice cream and Jackie Paine brought her water. Nancy and Kerry went and got water for the team.

We marched in review, with a small piece of our National Anthem being played as we passed the stand. We were roundly cheered with typical native ululations, also the chant of U....S....A. Ray says this was the most impressive reception that he has seen at a World's, indeed we were "Proud to be an American", thanks Lee Greenwood. As we finished our marching, the band then marched around past the reviewing stand and played "Columbia, Gem of the Ocean." We were impressed. This was followed by a spectacular airshow.

Back to the gliding part. Heard a rumor that Ray and Jim took first and second yesterday, but no score sheets, so who knows. Brian Spreckly said that the West wind (off the Kalahari) was good because it would dry everything out and produce a multiplicity of "dusties". (his advice, if you see one, don't go for it, but if there are six, you must. "We are ready and tomorrow the hammer goes down.

**Day Report - December 16, 2001**

**Bulletin 8, December 16 - John Good**

Today is the final practice day. Yesterday's soaring conditions proved somewhat better than expected, and the rain stayed north of the field. Winning speeds for all classes were around 115-120 kph. The final legs had pilots finishing from the south and southwest, where conditions were among the best yet seen in the practice period – there were reports of 6 and even 7 knots to over 11,000' MSL (7000' AGL). Glen, the oxygen refill man, actually had a small number of customers at the end of the day.



In the Standard Class, Chip Garner and Doug Jacobs connected with a beautiful

cloud street and flew home with no turns from about 90 miles out, averaging better than 150 kph for the final leg. This caused Doug to arrive about 5 minutes under the 3-hour minimum time, and on an Assigned Area Task this would hurt (the clock is still running and your competitors are still accumulating distance). Despite this, he was listed as the day winner at a decidedly brisk 128 kph. Trouble is, he was in practice mode and didn't actually completed the assigned task -- makes you wonder a bit about the automated scoring system.

Today's weather looks similar to yesterday's, though the cumulus don't seem as well formed and there are troubling mid-level clouds in some areas. The declared tasks are rather long for what appear to be only moderate conditions, and I expect that most pilots will be rather conservative – there's not much point in risking a landout in fields



that are still reasonably soft, even though tomorrow is a non-flying day (the Opening Ceremonies and an airshow are the scheduled events).



I have obtained a list of the acts scheduled for the airshow, and judging from this it will be a grand

spectacle indeed. Scheduled to fly are 15 parachutists, an aerobatic glider, a Pitts, a Tiger Moth, a Sea Fury, a Puma Helicopter, a Spitfire, a Yak, an Extra 300, a T-6 (Harvard), and some model aircraft and helicopters. There is also a "Car and Plane race" that sounds as if it could be interesting.

As you probably know, John Seaborn is the webmaster for the US Team pages on the SSA website, and he has been cracking the whip on us here in Mafikeng. As a result, we have been taking pictures that he soon should have posted.

It's now 4:30 pm and it begins to look as if not all pilots will get home. Mafikeng Airfield is under some blowoff from thunderstorms many miles to the west. The task area south of Mafikeng has no evident rain, but there is a large blue hole just south of the airfield. Karl Striedieck has just called on the team frequency to say that he thinks he can get within about 10 miles of home, but is unsure about finishing. I'm going to conclude this report and go hook up the DJ trailer, just in case it might be needed.



**Bulletin 8, December 16  
- Gary Kemp, US Team  
Captain**

Interesting day, longest





task for Open called at around 555K for the longest distance of an AAT task.

Tasks are called predominantly to the South and west. Haven't had time to talk to the pilots yet as we had to rush back to the hotel to get ready for the Opening social at the airport.

Everyone made it back, don't know if they all flew the task or not. Chip landed out about 40km at a ranch strip at Mareetsana and called for an aerotow. Sent one off, got a call back from the operation that the tug was overhead and another glider wanted to land and could Chip push off to the side, called Chip he could. Chip called back, tow pilot didn't have enough fuel to go back for the second glider and could I call and have another tug sent, I did. Fun time.

Anyway, I think the guys are anxious to start racing for real. Tomorrow, opening ceremonies and an airshow. More later.

**Editor -** Visit the [German team site](#) for South Africa as it is excellent although it is in German. The [Canadian team](#) has a site with many interesting photos. The [Dutch team](#) have an excellent site as well with many images if you do not read Dutch. The [British team](#) has an excellent site as well.

**Day Report - December 15, 2001**

## Bulletin 7, December 15 - John Good

Just two practice days to go. Monday is devoted to the opening ceremonies and a widely heralded airshow -- there will be no glider flying. The competition begins Tuesday, and runs through New Year's eve.

My evaluation of Friday's conditions proved a bit optimistic. The best lift was 5 knots to almost 5000' AGL, but this was not typical of the day. The beautiful cumulus clouds we saw throughout the afternoon were frequently "foolers", and pilots reported that they were often happy with 2 knots of lift. Still, everyone got home.

One consistent report on the flying around Mafikeng is that while there may be lift at low altitudes, it is nearly always weak and disorganized -- more so than at most sites. So getting low is not a good plan -- even if you don't land, you can easily waste 15-20 minutes digging yourself out of the hole. It looks to be important to stay well up in the height band, and it may be worth taking moderately weak climbs to avoid plunging low.

Today is looking like a repeat of yesterday, complete with a dose of overnight rain. It's 12:45 and launch has just commenced into a sky filled with promising clouds. But the bases are low and there are already some signs of overdevelopment and spreadout to the northeast. As the tasks take all classes south, where skies are bluer, we may be okay.

The task is an Assigned Area Task (AAT), and this is the first FAI-class World contest at which this task will be used. Brian Spreckley, one of the contest organizers, is a pioneer of this task, which no doubt has a lot to do with its use here.



7:00 AM  
12/15/01  
South Africa



12/15/01  
South Africa



With an AAT, you are given one or more fairly large turn areas that you must visit in sequence. Within each, you get credit

for the most favorable point that you actually visit (the point that gives you the best total distance). Thus, you can elect to just nip the closest point of a turn area, or you can go deep into it and so get credit for more distance. There is a declared minimum flight time, and for the best score you should plan your flight so that you finish at or just over the minimum. The task looks to be a reasonable one for dealing with conditions that may produce overdevelopment or rain, as pilots need not drive into a hopeless-looking area to visit a small assigned turnpoint.

But there are controversies. Under World rules, turn areas can be circular (which is reasonably simple) or "pie-shaped" (which isn't). In the most general case, it takes four numbers to define a turn area: inside radius, outside radius, and two radials (bearings to the "defining" turnpoint). This looks to be a fruitful area for complexity, misunderstanding and problems. Pilots naturally want to be able to know when they are inside a turn area; with a pie-shaped one, it take a rather complex GPS unit and careful programming to be sure. As with many teams here, with two days to go the biggest unresolved issue is

making sure that onboard computers are reliable, understandable, and correctly programmed prior to takeoff. Many comments on the order of "We should be measuring soaring skills, not computer skills" have been heard.



But wait, there's more. A pilot can be scored with two different speeds for an AAT. The first is called the Timeout

Speed. If the declared minimum time is 3 hours, the Scorer looks at your flight log and determines where you were 3 hours after your start. You may have been low over a swamp, high under a cloud, on final glider, or sitting in a muddy field – no matter, the Scorer calculates a distance for you and divides it by the minimum time to get your Timeout Speed. Pilots who want the best Timeout Speed need to be low, having glided out their height, converting it into distance.

For Finishers, the Scorer also calculates a Speed For Completing The Course, which is the conventional distance flown divided by time flown. The next step is to devalue the timeout speed based on the percentage of finishers – with no finishers, there is no devaluation; with 80% or more finishers, Timeout Speeds are devalued by 10%. The final step is to compare the two speeds and selected the better one.

This has some interesting implications: if you think your devalued Timeout Speed will be better than your Speed For Competing The Course, you probably won't want to finish (because not finishing may mean less devaluation of your Timeout Speed). Thus, with the way the

rules are written, even if you can fly home you'll want to land just short of the airfield, so you don't get counted as a finisher.

If the final task leg is into the wind, it might pay to plan your flight so that your timeout comes as you arrive at the downwind edge of the last turn area. You'll be faced with a retrieve, but you may well have a speed that's more than 10% better than those who try to slog home against the wind. If a number of pilots figure out this strategy, you may have some company in your (probably muddy) field, and the satisfaction of knowing that many landouts mean that Timeout Speeds won't be devalued much. Those smug finishers drinking beer back at Mafikeng won't be feeling so smug when they learn how the muddy outlanders have stolen a march. This problem could be avoided or at least reduced by avoiding final legs that are upwind, but the nature of the Mafikeng task area (the airfield is at the north edge of the task area, and north winds are common) may make this challenging.

So the AAT as implemented here has some unusual wrinkles. It will be interesting to see how this plays out.

It's now 3 pm. As the earlier clouds promised, the sky to the northeast has seriously overdeveloped – we'll be seeing rain and lightning there soon. The airfield still has fine weather, and to the south the pilots are reporting reasonably good conditions. A T-6 and a giant military helicopter are tied down now, having spent the last hour practicing for Monday's airshow. Based on today's flying this will consist of many noisy high-speed passes down the runway, quite low. But that's fine by the standards of glider pilots, and they may have many more tricks up their sleeves.



Gary Kemp, the US Team Captain, is off to a meeting of all team captains (there are said to be 22 countries



represented here). I've been to a couple of these at previous contests, and they can be entertaining. He has a list of questions to ask concerning areas where the official rules seem less than perfectly clear. For example, can a pilot land at the home field and decline a finish? If so, the strange scenario described above, wherein a pilot would arrive home but land just outside the airport fence, could be avoided. There seems to be plenty of scope for argument and wrangling. We await his report.

We had dinner last night at The Spur, a South African version of a US-style steakhouse, located just above the local BMW dealer and complete with a somewhat dubious try at Cowboy and Indian décor (though perhaps no more so than the typical Ponderosa). Doug Jacobs had a giant T-bone steak, which he found rather tough. I tried a local innovation consisting of an uncooked steak and a "hot rock" (which seemed suspiciously metallic), highly pre-heated and delivered to the table so that you can cook your own steak, as you like it. It was quite good. The total tab for three of us including a couple of beers each was \$14.

It's 3:45, and we now see our first threat of showers at the airfield. Nothing severe (yet) and the task area to the south still looks good. I expect this is the sort of anxiety we will find normal during the contest, so this can be said to be a useful practice day. The pilots are in marginal radio range, and seem to be doing fine,

but I expect some of the stragglers might have trouble getting home.

I'm going to file this report now. I'll try at least to make a brief report tomorrow, giving today's results.

**Gary Kemp, US Team Captain - Bulletin 7, December 15**

Rain, thunder and lightening (lots) over night. Field was very wet and we couldn't grid until after the pilot's meeting. Forecast was starting at 1-2 kts, up to 3-4 kts. Most pilots found better and reported top altitudes at 11,000'. Several pilots reported excellent streeting on the way home from the southwest turnpoints. Our pilots were practicing area tasking and so probably won't score well or not at all. They flew into the same areas. The 15 Meter went to Schweizer Reneke, Middlepunt (road junction) and return for a distance of 381.53 km.

Open class was down to the Southwest as well, but used two assigned areas for a minimum of 341.66 km and a maximum of around 555 km. Standard class was similar to the 15 Meter, with one common turn and about the same distance (at this writing I don't have the task sheet in front of me at the moment). Anyway, pilots felt good about their flying and it was hot and humid on the ground.

This is the beginning of Kwanza weekend, a big holiday and will culminate, at the airport, with the airshow and opening exercises. We got our directions for that today. One more day of practice and then hot and heavy on the 18th.

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many images if you do not read Dutch.

## Day Report - December 14, 2001

### Bulletin 6, December 14 - John Good

At the start of the week we were promised four or five days of good soaring, but after just two, low clouds and rain descended on Mafikeng, giving us more of what we've already had too much of. It's becoming clear that this contest is unlikely too see much of the conditions that this area is famous for – 18,000' cloud bases and 10-12-kt lift. There is simply too much moisture in (and on) the ground for that to be probable.

Fortunately, the task area offers generally good landability – you don't need to be 2 miles above the ground to feel comfortable. And, as we saw today, the weather can be better than forecast, with reasonable soaring conditions developing quickly. In view of the morning rain, the organizers postponed the pilots' meeting from 10:30 until noon, and during it announced that no task would be set, though tows would be available. By the end of briefing skies were nearly clear, and at 2pm small cumulus clouds were forming in most areas. The bases now look to be about 4000' AGL, far lower than Mafikeng pilots usually get excited about, but there were plenty of gliders ready to launch into what looks like pretty fair conditions. We'll see whether the normal afternoon thunderstorms come along to put an abrupt end to this.



Thunderstorms have the potential to dictate the course of this contest. From what we've seen, South African storms can stand with the best in the world. Yesterday evening as we were leaving the airfield we saw some high clouds that looked vaguely



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like lenticulars. We stopped briefly to consider them and realized that they were blowoff from some huge storms that had to be at least 80-100 miles southwest of Mafikeng. Storms don't have to be anything like that size to take charge of a contest day and badly scramble a scoresheet. They can also provide pilots with a good deal more excitement than desired, and can occasionally reward risky flying. I hope we get lucky and see relatively little of this influence once the contest starts.

Speaking of atmospheric phenomena, I must report a spectacular meteor (or perhaps a re-entering satellite?) that we saw yesterday at dusk while eating supper on our hotel's veranda. It started as a greenish fireball moving east-to-west, rather slowly for a meteor. It was visible for 3 or 4 seconds – long enough for those who first saw it to call it to the attention of others. It finished in a orange glow just above the horizon – certainly one of the most spectacular anyone had ever seen.

These dinners together as a team are a good way to end a soaring day. We've found several good restaurants in the area, and we tend to be rather lavish, ordering the best of food and wine, which in South Africa is quite good indeed. This lavishness arises not because we are rolling in dollars (in view of the cost of shipping gliders halfway round the world, most pilots are not), but because the exchange rate between the US Dollar and South African Rand is ridiculously, absurdly favorable just now. Last year the dollar bought about 7 rand, and the country was quite cheap. Right now, a dollar will get you 11.5 rand, making this country much the best value of any I've ever visited.

At those nice restaurants, a full meal from the top of the menu with a couple of bottles of first-rate South African wine for the table runs about \$7/person. Doug Jacobs decided

a bicycle would be useful at this huge airfield and bought a very serviceable mountain bike for just under \$40. I spent half an hour at the fine local old-fashioned hardware store buying hose, tubing, valves and fittings for a waterballast-fill system, plus tiedown stakes, rope, electrical outlets, extension cords, etc. and managed to spend \$35. If you're looking for a vacation in an interesting country with beautiful scenery (not much of it particularly near Mafikeng, I'll admit) at bargain rates, stop reading and book your flights now, before the world's financial markets come to their senses.

The US Team seems to be rounding into shape. The last big equipment issue was new wingtips for W3, the Discus 2a owned by Tim Welles and being flown by Chip Garner. Aerodynamicist Mark Maughmer of Penn State University has been working with M&H Soaring to produce a new set of wingtips incorporating his latest winglet ideas. These were recently completed, testtest, polished, packed and shipped, only to run into a roadblock at South African customs in Johannesburg.. It seems that customs personnel here rarely encounter winglets and don't really have a category for them. They dealt with this problem in time-honored fashion – by doing nothing for nearly a week. Many phone calls at last produced some action, and the winglets arrived this morning, just in time to meet the scrutineering deadline.

"Scrutineering" is the interesting name for the process whereby all gliders are measured, weighed, and checked to ensure that they comply with all equipment rules. Standard-Class and 15-Meter Class gliders must be measured to ensure that their span does not exceed 15.01 meters (there is a 1-cm tolerance). Open-Class gliders may fly at any span, but under international rules they may not change configuration.

A new rule this year pertains to weight



limits in the Open Class: 2-place motorized gliders no longer must meet the 750-kg weight limit – they can go to 850 kg provided they use no disposable ballast. There was some thought that this might make most existing Open-Class machines obsolete – in strong conditions the advantage of an extra 100 kg might be big. If the weather continues as it has, this debate is likely to be postponed to another contest with stronger conditions – with lift in the 2- to 3-knot range, few pilots will be looking for ways to cram in another 100 kg.

I've just returned from the on-field restaurant, a pleasant place in the under-used airline terminal building, with outdoor tables that overlook the apron and ramp. Gerhard Waibel, the great Schleicher designer is there, indulging in another of his specialties – sampling the local brews. He is an old hand at this, and seems to find that the local products (Castle and Windhoek are some of the favorites) come up to his standards. At around \$0.75 each, he can probably continue at his current rate indefinitely.

Some ways down the ramp is the briefing hangar, until recently an under-used cargo-handling facility. Its acoustics leave something to be desired (in a rain shower it's hard to hear anything), but in general it works well and is certainly handy. A resident barn owl obviously takes a dim view of this daily influx of chattering bipeds, but seems to be willing to wait patiently in the belief that this, too, shall pass.

Further north is a giant hangar that has been designated as the overnight parking place for Open-Class gliders. This beneficial-sounding arrangement hasn't worked quite as well as was hoped. Large as it is, not all the big-wingers will fit, especially when the early arrivers don't take care to pack their gliders well into the back. We already have reports of a conflict between South African

and French pilots over the finer points of how to cram three Nimbus 4's and an ASW-22 into space that could comfortably hold two of these. Three days ago Ingo Renner found that a 4-time World Champion receives rather little deference from his juniors when he shows up late in the day to find the hangar already full.

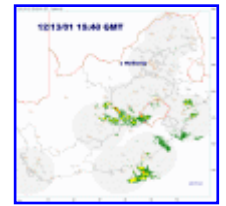
Many of the "stubbies" (15-meter span gliders) have elected not to use the assigned hangars – with a modern trailer, it's less work to assemble an LS-8 than to get it out from the back of a hangar and clean the dust and bird dropping from the wings. Since the US Team arrived early, we were able to stake out a favorable place in the area designated for assembly (strangely, parking slots were assigned on the "do it yourself" principle), and even have our own hose for ballasting gliders right at the trailer. From the crews' point of view, this is luxury indeed.

It's now 4:30 and the sky continues to look beautiful – the bases are probably above 5000' now, and there is little or no sign of overdevelopment or showers. On the US Team frequency, all is well – the pilots are about 90 miles out and finding no difficulties. I expect they'll be home in about an hour with smiles on their faces, and that the contest organizers will be asked by many why they did not declare a task today.

**Day Report - December 13, 2001**

## Bulletin 5, December 13 - John Good & Gary Kemp

John Good reports: "Weather was overcast and cool today, with a few breaks in the clouds; only a couple of flights were made." John is deep into a project to carefully read and understand the rules, for a team briefing at 8:30 this evening - so his report is a short one today.



12/13/01  
Radar

Gary Kemp reports: Yesterday, scoring difficulties precluded getting us a score sheet until late and then only one was posted. How the pilots did seemed to be based on how long they have been here and how much flying, for instance the two most senior in that regard, Gary Ittner and Karl Striedieck finished 1 and 2 in their class at 128 kph and 125.6kph respectively. Ray Gimmey and Jim Payne were 5th and 6th in Open at 112.7 and 111.8 flying a little longer AAT task. DJ and Chip were 7th and 10th.....Chip said he found every hole for the task area. Today was overcast caused by moist air from the Mozambique channel being pushed in from the east by a high pressure system off the east coast. Temperatures were forecast about 20: and 6-7/8's cloud cover. Lift 180-300 fpm to 7000' ft asl. Most of the pilots didn't fly, I know Karl did.

**Day Report - December 12, 2001**

## Bulletin 4, December 12 - John Good

Greetings from South Africa. The US Team and its sailplanes are here and our six pilots are flying on the second Official practice day. Those of you familiar with international contests will understand how much work is summarized in that statement.

Mafikeng is a city of about 110,000 located in north-central South Africa, about 200 miles northwest of Johannesburg (the country's largest city). The terrain here is around 4000' MSL and very flat -- as a pilot, you're reading clouds much more than terrain. This site is normally described as similar to Hobbs, NM - brown, dry and hot with 10-knot thermals to 10,000' or more above the ground.

But conditions aren't normal just now. There has been an unusual amount of rainfall in the past month, and the land everywhere is pleasantly green. Unfortunately, this means that soaring conditions are not what could be wished - cloudbases have mostly been 3,000 to 5,000' AGL, with lift erratic but typically 2 to 3 knots. Thunderstorms are common - in the past week there has been just one day without several anvil clouds in view, and the biggest have been truly spectacular. Several have passed close to the home field, and we've enjoyed a few tropical deluges.

It's worth noting that Mafikeng is almost tropical - the latitude is just shy of 26 degrees south, so at this time of year the sun is nearly directly overhead at noon. A lot of solar energy strikes the ground during a day, and a lot of pilots here wish that more of it went into producing thermals of the 6- to 10-knot kind, rather than 2 knots in the morning followed by 35 knots (cu-nim) in the afternoon. Yet we



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seem to be on an improving trend, and there is a week to go until the start of competition.

The airfield is something amazing. There is a single NE-SW runway that is some 200' wide and 14,000' long. It has several large hangars and a more or less normal amount of ramp space. There is a terminal building and an operational tower, quite capable of dealing with an average of about a dozen flights a week. Brian and Gillian Spreckley (she the current Women's World Champion, he a former World Champion) have for several years run a soaring operation here in the northern winter. They have been deeply involved in organizing this contest, and the value of having experienced and competent competition pilots planning things shows.

The airfield lies about 5 miles north of the city of Mafikeng, and about 10 miles southeast of the border of Botswana, in whose airspace pilots are not permitted to fly. So the task area lies to the east, south and southwest. All of this area is flat, (normally) dry and sparsely populated, with more than enough agriculture to ensure good landability. So the implications of flying in weather that may not be the best possible are not nearly as grim as they might be were there mountains to deal with. One view is that this is pretty reasonable soaring by Eastern US standards. Another is: "We came halfway around the world for this?"

As those who follow the US Team web pages know, the US has six pilots, two in each of the 3 classes. Here's the lineup: In Open Class, Ray Gimmey is flying an ASW-22 BLE (contest ID 7V) which he was able to rent in South Africa; his crew is Kenny Price and his wife Ruth. Sherman Griffith



was to have been the other Open Class pilot, but sadly at the last moment he had to cancel due to a family medical emergency. Jim Payne was able to step in, and will be flying HW, a Nimbus 4 owned by Heinz Weissenbuehler; his wife Jackie is his able crew. In 15-Meter class we have Gary Ittner flying P7, his Ventus C; his crew is Stan Foats. Karl Striedieck is flying KS, his ASW-27; his brother Walter is crew (wife Iris will arrive in a week). In Standard Class, Chip Garner is flying W3, a Discus 2a lent by SSA Chairman Tim Welles; his crew includes Paul Weeden and Mary Lattimore. Doug Jacobs is flying DJ, a brand-new LS-8; his crew is wife Martha and John Good.

Getting the planes here was no mean feat. Along with K1 (an LS-8 belonging to Dale Kramer of the Canadian Team) KS, W3, and P7 came in two containers. It's a considerable challenge packing two glider trailers into a standard shipping container. The wheels and axles must be removed, and one of the trailers must be elevated on strong supports (and at an angle) to make room for the other underneath. Then trailers and axles must be securely lashed to withstand the rigors of a sea voyage of several weeks. At the destination a crane must unload the trailer and then the wheels, fenders, brake, etc. must be reinstalled. In the case of Gary Ittner, the pilot must also drive his trailer from California to Philadelphia, then look forward to repeating the trip when the glider arrives home in early March.

It could have been worse. The US Team's gliders arrived on time and were claimed promptly at the port. This proved fortunate, as a dock strike soon followed, and teams including the Italians and the Germans spent several anxious days as their gliders sat on ships which the

longshoremen in the port of Durban showed no interest in unloading. As of today we hear that the strike is resolved and all gliders will make it to Mafikeng for the contest.

A contest practice period might sound as if it should be rather leisurely, with pilots gradually preparing themselves for the full rigor of the actual competition. In fact, it's like a version of "Junkyard Wars" in a tolerably remote junkyard, as pilots and crews scramble to buy/invent/scrounge/improvise solutions to the problems of filling with water ballast and drinking water, charging batteries, getting instruments, computers and GPS flight recorders to work reliably, understanding new tasks, rules, and weather patterns, and navigating around a strange town while driving on the left side of the road. So far, we seem to be doing reasonably well. With all the challenges, it's rather commendable that we have six competent pilots aboard six airworthy (and, it appears, fully competitive) gliders

I'll present more about all this in my next report, in a couple of days. Once the competition starts, I'll be reporting daily on tasks and results.

## Day Report - December 10, 2001

### **Bulletin 3, December 10 - Gary Kemp, US Team Captain**

Scheduled first practice day - Guess what, today it rained, rained and rained some more. We got registration done and our security passes. Pilot's meeting covered some of the general stuff that we needed to know about launches and landings. Also pilots started the "scrutineering" process, that is to see, are they the right weight and wings the proper span. Most pilots took the opportunity to fettle up systems and prepare. Our last two pilots and crew

arrived today and we will have our first team meeting tonight.

## Day Report - December 9, 2001

### Bulletin 2, December 9 - Gary Kemp, US Team Captain

The weather doesn't look very good today. Doug says it is like Florida with less consistent lift, about the same heat and humidity at the moment. Organizers say, "very unusual weather, it should get better", one can only hope. Our three team pilots who are flying today set a 3 hour PST to Stella, Delrayville and return, with an assigned area at both turnpoints. Lift went to about 4,000 agl at best and 1.5 kts, with spots of better, Karl got around fairly well, Gary got low (700 feet), but got home. Doug, in his first flight in his new LS8-18, landed on the entrance road to the field. Dale Kramer, Canadian flying with us for practice landed south of Stella and Carmen tells of a very "interesting" retrieve. We've told her not to go alone again. Ray has resolved some battery problems in his borrowed ASW-22 and the rest of our team pilot's should arrive today the 10th. Today we will also begin to register and occupy our team hut and have the first practice day. Photos by: Gary Kemp



Doug Jacobs  
& crew  
John Good  
Water Caution



Doug Jacobs

## Day Report - December 7, 2001

### Bulletin 1, December 7 - Gary Kemp, US Team Captain

Greetings from Mafikeng. We arrived on Tuesday the 4th after a very long (14 hr) flight from Atlanta. We had to go up to Keith Ashman's (a glider repair person who has been of great help to us) place in Pretoria to secure connections to Heinz' Glider, to be used by Jim Payne, replacing Sherman Griffith). Ray and Gary Ittner were with us and John Good was already there. Karl Striedieck had preceded us by a couple of days. We connected with Keith

and proceeded to follow him to Magaliesberg to the Magalies glider club there. Beautiful grass field, hangers, club house, pool and 185 members. We picked up HW and Gary Ittner and Nancy and I proceeded on the road to Mafikeng, about 175 miles. Ray had to go to Henniman to pick up the ASW-22 he is renting and install his instruments that were in Heinz' trailer. We arrived in Mafikeng that evening and began to settle in. The rest of the pilot's should be here this weekend.

Karl had flown a couple of times, yesterday Gary, Karl and John Good (flying in Doug Jacobs new ship) flew about 150 mile triangle and Ray flew in from Henniman, about 200 miles. The area has had unusual weather (what's new, were having a soaring contest) and the first night we were here we must have had 8 inches of rain.

Today, the 7th, the air mass was different and the guys landed fairly quickly. Nancy and I are trying to get the lay of the town and have been lost several times. Costs of food, meals, etc, are quite low due to the strength of the dollar and we can get a nice steak dinner for under \$5.00.

## USA Soaring Team Results 2001/2002

See the [US Team News](#) for the top finishers in each class plus the US pilots standings. See the U.S. [Team Archive](#) for U.S. Team background since 1950. As part of the Archive tour see the [US Team History](#) page for a complete listing of US Teams or the [World Champions](#) page for a complete listing of champions.

US Team Web Additions? Problems? Corrections? [US Team Web Master](#)

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