

2024 US NATIONALS CHIEF JUDGES' REPORT
Glider Primary & Intermediate, Power Intermediate
Categories

Venue: US Nationals Aerobatic Contest, 2025.

Salina Regional Airport, Salina, Ks

Sept 28 to Oct 3, 2025

Chief Judge: Dave Watson

Competition Flights: (Powered and Glider) Intermediate and
Glider Primary: Known, Free and Unknown

Overview: The Overlord (John Smutny) and Starters (Dale and Doug) did a MAGNIFICENT job moving the pilots from starting to high hold. We were able to maintain less than 2 minutes separation between the exit of a prior competitor and the entrance of the next pilot (with only a very few exceptions for gliders that needed to get 'closer' to the box before dropping tow). FANTASTIC Job. Shad did a great job as CD reinforcing safety and efficiency!

Weather: The Free flights were weather delayed by 30 minutes and an approx. 90 min weather break was required (with 5 competitors remaining) due to TS and lightning in vicinity.

Registration: The Clipboards were checked on the van ride out to the line to save time at the CJ tent and to get planes in the air faster. The Known boards included the forms for a competitor that had apparently withdrawn (he did not respond to role call). I did not remove his forms from the clipboards at the time of checking, and I failed to notify the

judges to toss his forms when his slot came up and he did not report to start up. This was not caught by one of the five judges resulting in a minor inconvenience. My bad! The clipboards for the Free flight order of flight listing had a duplication of one competitor (but only included the paperwork at the first location). This was caught and corrected during checking. Great job with the paperwork!

Volunteer Coordinator: Alice did a great job getting everyone on the buses at the proper time and no delays were necessary for missing volunteers – Thank you Alice.

Communications: The What's Up App was invaluable to contest communications. Thanks to Monique!

Scoring: The Scanner on the Chief Judges' line worked excellently with one short issue that did not affect the timely distribution of scores.

Videographer: The few "Video Replays" that were required were very efficiently found and played. Thank you, Forrest

Judges' Station: Was always set up and ready to go. No delays looking for needed items. Thank You.

Flights: Our lines processed over 100 flights in the 3 programs. All flights were uneventful, safe and efficient.

Judges: In my estimation (and as agreed with the two CJ assistants in quiet-private discussions) at least four Intermediate power competitors 'got away with' low and/or Low-Low calls. I think the box limits need to be "better stressed" to the judges at all briefings.

Conclusions:

We made some changes to the way pilots were handed off to the CJ from Overlord. In the Known, they were

instructed to contact CJ when instructed by Overlord to change frequency. In the Free and Unknown flights, they were instructed to switch frequencies and remain quiet until the CJ called them. The latter worked better, and I would recommend that for next year.

I penalized one competitor for improper location of the 'safety check' in the Free flight. His ½ roll – ½ roll was performed during a fly through of the box, resulting in a 2-3 minute delay while the pilot repositioned. The location of the safety check was CLEARLY briefed to be on BASE only during the Known flight briefing (and yet this was not repeated explicitly during the Free flight brief). However, the Free brief did include a notice that 'everything from yesterday is to remain the same, are there any questions or comments?' A protest was filed, and the penalty withdrawn. The Jury did NOT question me during its analysis of the protest. I think it is inappropriate to try to rush briefs (by eliminating obvious repetitions from the previous day's brief), and yet reward pilots for not following the instructions from previous briefs. This may have set a very bad precedence that EVERYTHING must be briefed at all briefings.

The briefing slide deck (as given to the CJ's) showed the location of the power holds (with red ovals) directly over runway 17-35). This led to some confusion as pilots were told not to overfly the runways and this confusion delayed the briefings. I recommend showing the location of the holds more geographically accurate for clarity next year.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have served as CJ. Thank you.