

To: IAC Board & Officers

From: Shad Coulson, Glider Chair

Subject: Annual Report on Glider Aerobatics

Date: Oct. 23, 2025

Competitors

Glider aerobatics continues to see an increase in interest and participation. In 2025, we had 40 different glider pilots compete at six IAC sanctioned events. This increase is associated with two primary factors. First, there has been an increase in the purchase and availability of aerobatic gliders, primarily the MDM Fox, in the U.S. The increased inventory of aerobatic gliders in the U.S. creates more opportunity for glider pilots to practice and participate in IAC events. Second, we continue to increase the number of qualified glider aerobatic instructors and facilities where training can occur. Formerly, this training was offered almost exclusively at Arizona Soaring or the U.S. Air Force Academy. We have expanded this training to two additional schools in California and are looking to expand further in the future, to include a facility on the East coast.

Competitions

In addition to increasing the availability of aircraft and training, we are actively seeking opportunities to expand competition access. Prior to 2023, glider aerobatics was routinely conducted at four IAC events. We expanded that to six in 2023 and seven events in 2024. We had initially hoped to host gliders at eight contests in 2025, but the government shutdown and other logistics limited us to six contests. We will continue our efforts to expand participation in glider aerobatics. A summation of the 2025 events are as follows:

Estrella Classic (AZ) - 22 Pilots

Primary: 6

Sportsman: 7

Intermediate: 9

Hammerhead Roundup (CA) – 2 Pilots

Intermediate: 1

Advanced: 1

Ben Lowell (CO) – 18 Pilots

Primary: 2

Sportsman: 8

Intermediate: 4

Advanced: 4

U.S. Nationals (KS) – 28 Pilots

Primary: 4

Sportsman: 9

Intermediate: 6

Advanced: 8

Unlimited: 1

Salina Glider Classic (KS) – 6 Pilots

Advanced: 5

Unlimited: 1

Clyde Cable (CO) – 7 Pilots

Primary: 3

Sportsman: 3

Unlimited: 1

Sequence Progression

One of my ongoing initiatives as glider chair is to clearly define the categories and provide levels of development and progression from one to the next. This effort continues, as evident in the 2026 Glider Known programs.

A summation of the guidelines used for the 2025 and 2026 Known sequence construction is below:

Primary: approx. 60k / 6 figures

- No Spins
- No hesitation rolls
- No vertical figures
- Limited looping figures (loop & 1/4 clover)

Sportsman: approx. 100K / 7-8 figures

- No vertical figures i.e. hammers, humpty bumps
- No hesitation rolls

Intermediate: approx. 140K / 8-9 figures

- Intro to vertical figures, no tailslides
- Hesitation rolls on level lines

Advanced: approx. 180K / 9-10 figures

- Intro to negative work, no more than 45-degree inverted pushes
- Intro to hesitation rolls on 45 up/down lines
- No rolls on up-lines

Unlimited: approx. 220K / 9-10 figures

- All eligible figures can be used.

Additionally, you will notice an increased complexity in the Advanced category if you compare previous known programs to those flown in 2023-2025 and proposed for 2026. We have stopped designing the Advanced sequence with the AF's DG-1000 in mind. The Air Force now has an MDM-Fox, which is a far more capable aerobatic aircraft. Their access to that platform allows us to expand figure selection within the Aresti catalogue and to design more appropriate sequences for the advanced category.

Rule Updates

My second ongoing initiative as glider chair is to update the IAC rulebook and P&Ps in support of current aerobatic gliders, competitors, and culture within the IAC and glider communities. This activity will be conducted slowly and methodically to ensure the changes made are appropriate and sustainable. Changes were proposed and approved for 2023, 2024, and 2025 rulebooks. Additional changes have been proposed for 2026, focused primarily on updating the approved unknown figure sets, and will be reviewed by the IAC BOD during the upcoming fall meeting.

World Competition

Unfortunately, there was no bid to host a World Glider Aerobatic Championships and World Advanced Glider Aerobatic Championships (WAGAC/WAGAC) in 2025. There will be a WGAC/WAGAC held in Fayence, France in September of 2026. We are hopeful we'll send representation from the U.S. to that event. We currently have more glider pilots participating in competition aerobatics than ever before and more pilots interested in participating at the world level.

In support of efforts to continue fielding strong US teams, we are aligning some elements of the Advanced and Unlimited IAC known and unknown programs with elements we have or may see at future world competitions.

Finally, we continue to foster strong relationships with the Polish, German, UK, and Hungarian glider aerobatic teams, who continue to support the U.S. Teams with aircraft and ground personnel at the various WGAC/WAGAC events. We are working with Ference Toth (9x World Champion) to develop a training and coaching program to improve our programs competency and competitiveness at future world events. Finally, we are collaborating with the German and UK teams and hope to attend joint training camps as well as Open Championships in the future.

We are excited about the prospects for the U.S. Glider Aerobatic team going forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as the Glider Chair. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shad Coulson', with a stylized, flowing script.

Shad Coulson
Glider Chair