

From: IGC World Class Subcommittee
Subject: Brief report on the World Class for 2006

On the manufacturers side:

- A major 2006 item was the transition to new manufacturers, Swidnick having announced in late 2005 their intention to transfer their production of the PW5 and PW6.
- The Glider Factory " Jeżów" (SZD-JEŻÓW in Jeżów Sudecki, Poland) took over Swidnick's production, and in 2006 received Type Certificates issued by EASA for the PW-5 and PW-6U gliders. They are now offering new PW5s at a very attractive price (www.szajesow.com.pl).
- The manufacturer of the B1-PW5 version is now officially named DELTA, and has continued support and production of the B1 (The latest two gliders produced augmenting the USA fleet this winter).
- With the production transitions having taken place, focus in 2007 will be on renewed efforts to ensure the completion of the altitude limit extension paperwork for all PW5 (completed for all B1-PW5, but delayed for more than 350 "Smyk" PW5s, due to Swidnick owner's database having yet to be transferred to Jeżów).

On the contest and records side:

- The 2006 WGC of the World Class in Vinon, France, was a superb event, regrouping about the same number of contestants as in previous contests. Quality and sportsmanship certainly made up for quantity (as the Grand Prix competitions have demonstrated, great contests can be held with few gliders). Nevertheless, many overseas countries desiring to attend were prevented by the low availability of gliders for hire and the prohibitive costs of shipping gliders to Europe. Efforts in 2007 and 2008 should focus on means to augment glider availability for overseas countries. On the other hand, countries such as Brazil were again able to participate in a FAI WGC with pilots at the World Class WGC, while not attending the Sweden WGC event.
- In another positive turn, we were pleased to see our Italian friends holding their first World Class National contest in 2006 (joining a growing set of countries, such as POL, USA, NZ, etc.), in preparation for their upcoming WGC and, after some absence, to again field a World Class Team at the 2008 WGC.
- The 2008 WGC will be under the new WGC structure, expected to bring further positive effects.
- Several World record flights were made, including some in waves in Argentina at incredible speeds. Our local friends tell us to stand watch for the first 1000 Km flight in a PW5...

Membership trends

- The overall World Class membership and fleet, concentrated mostly in countries not having an infrastructure based on large clubs (that the more Soaring-established countries have) and in the less financially fortunate countries, seem to be steady and, in some countries show slight growth, an encouraging better-than-average performance considering the otherwise overall membership declines affecting our Sport.
- Further noting that the World Class actually feeds pilots to the other classes (when pilots lucky enough to become able to afford them, transition to "more-expensive-wings"), this steady or slightly growing membership indicates a proportionally greater rate of entry of pilots than in the other classes.
- From spot observations (e.g., in the USA), membership and participation in events also appear to show positive trends in juniors selecting the World Class for their first National contest, females (who may find the World Class atmosphere - and the weight of the wings to be lifted for assembly - less intimidating than in other classes), and transitioning hang-glider pilots (lesser jump in machine cost when entering the sailplane racing arena..?), all very positive signs for new membership attraction and retention in the sport.
- Overall, it seems that the World Class is continuing to steadily perform its role as an entry avenue to our sport and to competitive racing, in particular for less financially fortunate pilots (who otherwise would not be or would not remain in the sport), or in countries that do not have a large-club infrastructure. Certainly, we see that overall membership statistics for our sport would be much worse without it.

Respectfully submitted.

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