



## The Tape Does Not Lie

Film sessions – Those revealing times when the coaches broke down the film from this week's game and dissected everyone's performance. No matter how well you thought you did, the coaches could always find a flaw or missed assignment. And sometimes, you did all you could to melt into your seat and hide. Because all the good, the bad, and the ugly was there for all to see.

But you realized that they did this to make you a better player. And to make the team perform better as a group, it was necessary for you to see how what you did fit into the big picture.

What does this have to do with a glider operation?

Sometimes you think your operation is being run one way, when actually it is being run another way. One way to find this out is to have an outside observer watch the operation. Another is to film the operation and play the part of outside observer yourself.

One of the fun things we do at the Flight Instructor Revalidation Clinics that the SSF conducts is to break down a YouTube video of a launch. There are plenty available there to choose from. Pick one and critically analyze it. Ask some basic questions.

Is the tow pilot a resource for the glider pilot, or is he/she waiting at the end of a taut rope while the glider is prepped for flight?

Do wing runners truly check the pattern for traffic? Or are they checking that their shoelaces are tied as they walk out to the wingtip?

Are the glider and pilot ready when the rope is taut and wing runner is lifting the wing?

Is the take-off checklist being done while everyone waits in position? Is the takeoff checklist even being done at all?

Grab a camera and casually film your operation. Look at the video with a jaun-

diced eye and ask yourself if you would want my class of CFI-Gs analyzing you.

I often ask that question of the FIRC attendees and do not get many affirmative responses. It is easy to see them envisioning their operation up on the screen. They can think of their peers sitting in the clinic, looking at the video and finding flaws with their operation. And you can see they do not want to be the lesson for the day.

So how do you prevent your operation from becoming the lesson of the day?

Analyze your launch procedures. Make sure the wing runner, safety officer, and tow pilot are actively involved in making sure the glider is ready for launch. Ready to launch means all occupants belted in, checklist complete and canopies secured. Make sure glider configuration can be, and is being, positively checked by all those involved. Make sure the safety officer and wing runner check the pattern for traffic. Although we know it is not the case at some operations, it is urged that you consider not allowing the tow plane to taxi into position on the runway until the glider is ready for launch.

The tow plane taxiing out should mean the pattern is clear and the glider is ready. The tow pilot should expect the launch signal once the rope is taut.

At this point, the tow pilot adding power to start the takeoff roll is the final link in the safety chain. Make sure he/she has as much information as possible to make an informed and intelligent decision about doing that.

But what about sweltering under a closed canopy while the tow plane taxis into position. If you think about it, it really doesn't take that long. Flying out of Pensacola in the summer, I can tell you from personal experience that while it is uncomfortable for 45 seconds, it is not unbearable. And it is a heck of a lot better than replacing the canopy after



launching with it unlatched.

For more self-analysis, you could even mount a camera in the cockpit and film yourself.

Put a GoPro camera in the cockpit and film away. Watch the film and observe what you really do in flight. Do you look out for traffic, or stare at the variometer? Is your checklist discipline what you think it is?

And while you are at it, have your club members film their landings. You would be amazed how much learning happens by watching yourself and others. Those crazy guys who land jet airplanes on ships at sea film and analyze their landings (controlled crashes?). If it works for them, maybe it can work for us.

It is time for us to start incorporating technology into our safety analysis.

Here is my challenge to y'all. Film your operation and/or yourself. Post it on the web. Dare me to find it and present it to the class. Make your operation something I would want to present as a model of success.

No, no, really coach, I took a two-step drop before pulling out on the sweep..... ✈

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