



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Todd Gunther
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: February 27, 2018
Person Contacted: Steven E. Moore (FAA)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18LA089

According to Inspector Moore, he responded to a report from the Atlanta ROC on February 25, 2018, concerning a fatal aircraft accident at the Mid Florida Airport in Eustis Florida (X55). The accident occurred at approximately 8:10 am. The aircraft involved was N98YW, an Edge XT-912-L Light Sport weight shift control aircraft (Trike) manufactured by Airborne Windsports LLC.

The location of the accident was at the northwest side of runway 18 on airport property, approximately 50 feet to the west of the centerline of runway 18 and 100 feet to the north of the displaced threshold. The aircraft was landing to the south on runway 18 when the accident occurred. The aircraft was destroyed as a result of the accident.

Sheriff Robertson (on site law enforcement) reported that pilot Mr. John Ellis Farmer was fatally injured. A check of Mr. Farmer's record showed that he held a sport pilot certificate with a weight shift control land endorsement. In addition, he held a repairman light sport aircraft certificate.

A witness at the airport, Mr. Russ Smith stated the pilot spent most of the day before the accident assembling the aircraft. On the morning of the accident, Mr. Smith said that Mr. Farmer taxied the aircraft to runway 18 where he made three takeoffs and three landings. These were very short he estimated the aircraft raised an altitude of appropriately 30 feet when the pilot would land back on the runway. He believed this was to test the aircraft before a complete traffic pattern was attempted. Mr. Smith further stated that after these three short takeoffs and landings, the pilot taxied back to the beginning of runway 18 completing two more short takeoffs and landings and on the third attempt he added power and made a complete left hand traffic pattern. Mr. Smith told me that he was in his hanger but saw the aircraft on left downwind and felt there was no issues, until he heard the aircraft impact the ground. He said he was the first on the scene. The aircraft was in a nose down attitude with the top of the wing facing south. that the aircraft engine sounded normally.

Mr. Rex Wyatt (the airport manager) said that Mr. Farmer and several other individuals had worked on the aircraft to assemble it. He stated that Mr. Farmer appeared to be an experienced sport pilot and that he had flown that type of aircraft (a Trike) before. Mr. Wyatt said this was the first flight this aircraft made after it was shipped to Mr. Farmer from Hawaii. Mr. Wyatt said that one of the individuals that may have

helped assemble the aircraft was Mr. Buddy Babcock. Mr. Wyatt said that Mr. Babcock has a great deal of experience with this type of aircraft.

On Monday February 26, 2018, Mr. Wyatt phoned inspector Moore to state that when they moved the aircraft from the accident site, they found the airspeed indicator. It was stuck on 34 knots. In addition, Mr. Wyatt said that a student from the local flight school said he saw the aircraft on final approach and the wings were rocking back and forth as well as the power seemed to be increasing and decreasing.



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Person Contacted: Steven E. Moore (FAA)
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According to Inspector Moore, he spoke to Mr. Mitchell Krzysztan.

Mr. Krzysztan was pulling into the airport when he saw the aircraft on short final. The aircraft's wings were rocking back and forth. He said the aircraft was producing power. When he lost sight of the aircraft behind a building, it was in a right wing nose low attitude.



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Date: February 27, 2018
Person Contacted: Rex Wyatt (Airport Manager)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18LA089

According to Mr. Wyatt, they had 8 or 9 trikes at the airport and the trike pilots would all hang around together. Mr. Farmer was very safety minded and had purchased the accident trike from someone in Hawaii. This was his first flight in this make and model. The accident happened the first time he flew it in the traffic pattern.



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Date: February 27, 2018
Person Contacted: Russ Smith (Witness)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18LA089

According to Mr. Smith, Mr. Farmer had purchased the trike a couple of months earlier (December of 2017). Mr. Farmer had installed the wing on it on Saturday (February 24th) and then flew it for the first time on Sunday (February 25th).

All the trike guys would come in early on the weekends to fly. It was early in the day on the 25th and there was little or no wind. Mr. Farmer was on the left downwind leg of the traffic pattern when Mr. Smith stepped into a hangar. Mr. Smith could hear the engine, the rpm never changed, and the engine never sputtered. Mr. Smith heard the rpms increase, just before the trike "hit", like Mr. Farmer was "trying to break the stall".



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Date: February 27, 2018
Person Contacted: Fernan Rodriguez (Spouse)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18LA089

According to Mr. Rodriguez, Mr. Farmer had just purchased the trike from Hawaii. The trike was “very clean, it was pristine”. Mr. Farmer was “very meticulous”.

It was Mr. Farmer’s first flight in the trike.

Mr. Rodriguez advised that it was powered by possibly a Rotax 100 horsepower engine that had been overhauled, and that the wing was smaller than on Mr. Farmer’s other trike.

Mr. Rodriguez also advised that the previous owner had used the trike for air tours.



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Date: February 28, 2018
Person Contacted: Dayton "Buddy" Babcock (Witness)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18LA089

According to Mr. Babcock, All the trike pilots were social with each other, including Mr. Farmer who was a competent and careful pilot, and was reserved and humble.

Mr. Babcock had offered to test fly the trike for him as Mr. Farmer had only flown his personal trike and had never flown this type of trike before, but around 0745, Mr. Farmer said "I am going to go for it".

Mr. Babcock mentioned that to descend on Mr. Farmer's trike you could pull the bar in all the way but the accident trike had an SST/Arrow wing, and if you did that, it would roll back and forth. You only had to pull it in 3-4 inches. Mr. Farmer "just did not know how to fly this one".

Mr. Babcock also added that Mr. Farmer was at a high-power setting when he "hit".



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Date: February 29, 2018
Person Contacted: Richard McAtee
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18LA089

According to Mr. McAtee, a gentleman who was fixing up Mr. McAtee's Quicksilver heard the crash.

Mr. McAtee had owned a trike with the SST wing which was manufactured just before the Arrow wing and advised that if you overspeed the wing, it would become unstable.

Mr. McAtee also advised that Mr. Farmer was a good pilot, but it was his first flight in the trike.



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Date: February 30, 2018
Person Contacted: Mitchell Krzysztan
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18LA089

According to Mr. Krzysztan, He was driving into the airport when he saw the trike come over the trees.

The trike overshot the left base leg of the traffic pattern then turned but overshot final and ended up to the right of the final approach leg. The trike then made a “hard left” then went out of control.

The wings were going “back and forth”, then the right wing “went down”, and the trike hit the ground.

When the right wing “went down”, you could see the top of the wings.

The engine was running the entire time, and you could hear it speed up just before the trike “hit”.