



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Brian C. Rayner
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: February 13, 2021
Person Contacted: Captain Rich Owen – Gliderport Vice President
NTSB Accident Number: ERA20LA145 – Groveland, FL

Narrative:

Captain Owen was a retired Naval Aviator and airline captain who was the vice-president of the parent company of the accident gliderport. He was interviewed by telephone and participated in a lengthy email chain that provided overall operational understanding at the gliderport, a general history of the pilot and his glider, and offered help in the potential download of devices recovered from the wreckage.

Plans were made to conduct the download attempts on scene, but due to COVID concerns and restrictions at the time, those plans were abandoned, and the devices were forwarded to the NTSB.

According to Captain Owen, the glider had recently been flown in a glider competition by another pilot. He offered that information, as the control continuity of participating gliders was confirmed and certified by competition judges prior to the competition, and the glider had not been disassembled between the date of the competition and the date of the accident.

The following are excerpts from the emails exchanged with Captain Owen:

4/8/2020

Brian,

Touching base with you regarding the accident at Seminole-Lake Gliderport. My name is Rich Owen and I'm the Vice President for Seminole Flying & Soaring, the parent company of the gliderport. I'm a retired Navy fighter pilot, retired Delta pilot and glider pilot. I've collected all the written statements and gave them to the Sheriff's Office detective. Unfortunately, I asked to make a copy and he said no. However,

they will be available on the Lake County Sheriff's website under case number #200044727.

This is some information that documents Marc's flights since he purchased the glider in November 2019.

We do not think the flight on November 10th was Marc's. It was probably the previous owner, Joe Bostik. Steve Gibb was his instructor for a private glider add on in November 2019. Marc was a private power pilot and experienced hang glider pilot but relatively new to soaring.

Jesse was the tow pilot for the mishap flight. Bo and Laura were hooking up gliders at the end of a 3,500ft grass runway and they witnessed the accident.

The aircraft had flown in a glider competition from March 12-18th by another pilot. The ship was kept in a hangar and had not been disassembled since then. This was his first flight since the competition ended.

We retrieved three devices that store flight data for competition scoring purposes. One recorder was still on and in relatively good shape. THIS IS NOT AN ACCIDENT RECORDER! If you do not download this log properly, the device may erase the file. These recorders are for contest scoring purposes and have internal anti-tampering software to prevent a log from being tampered with!!! We can bring the proper cables and software to download the file safely. You can see the manufacturer's website at gliding.lxnav.com/products/nano. To display the log in a 3D display go to naviter.com/products/seeyou. This software gives you all the flight parameters for the flight, and a variety of options to view the mishap flight. To see an example of this software, go to SGP.aero/usa/2017/race-coverage/videos.aspx.

4/8/2020

It would be my pleasure to assist you in downloading the files in the Orlando FSDO office or anywhere of your choosing. I have the exact same device so I am very comfortable in downloading the file. I will bring my device with me and download one of its files with Jason watching so he is aware of the process. I will also bring my flight analysis software so we can run the flight log, print out the statistics page, and we might be able to Skype the results to everyone. If the devices have been mailed out, I can ship the cords, laptop and manual on how to do the download. If you want to see all the flights he flew, we can download all 8 flights. You might see a trend, good or bad, with reviewing his flights.

I also have an Oudie but I would like to bring another pilot with me that has much more knowledge on this system. We will bring all hardware to

download the flight log. However, the Oudie was damaged much more than the Nano. The same flight analysis software is used for reviewing the Oudie flight log.

I would like to pass on a couple of observations that I learned today. The Nano was actually found in the road in front of the house where the crash occurred.

4/10/2020

I cannot imagine that the logbooks would be in the hangar since it is not completely enclosed. It is a three sided structure with the front open to the elements. The best place to find the logbooks will be in Marc's house.

The gliderport has a set of field rules that govern how aircraft are supposed to be flown from our private field. I'm enclosing a copy.

The ladies are the wives of two of the pilots that flew that day. Because of the virus, we do not have employees hooking up the gliders. Pilot's are responsible for this action in what we call an unassisted takeoff. Normally, the pilot would be wearing his chute and make the connection between the glider and tow plane. He would then get into the glider, strap in, complete the before takeoff checklist, close the canopy and signal the tow pilot he is ready for the launch. No one holds the wing while the aircraft starts its takeoff roll. The pilot levels the wings with control inputs and from there the takeoff is normal. If you land out in an airport not Seminole-Lake, this is the procedure you follow if you plan to do an aero retrieve (tow plane fly's to the airport and tow you out) vice having a car and trailer come get you. However, like any airport community, everyone helps each other. Laura did the hook up of her husband's ship (she feels more comfortable with that) and helped others on the line including the mishap glider. Laura has hooked me up numerous times, and I can say without reservation, she is excellent. As for being positioned for takeoff, all the gliders were towed down by the pilots themselves and placed in their takeoff spots. This is a little unusual since we normally push the gliders to the side of the runway so as not interfere with other gliders landing. These ships were actually positioned in the overrun and not on the runway. The overrun is used for takeoff and landing depending on the wind. Since they were the only ships going flying that day, they were put in takeoff position

vice moved to the side. Short answer, Laura did not help the mishap pilot position the glider. Control checks are done by the pilot as part of the before takeoff checklist. They are taught to look out the canopy and verify the motion of each surface (except the rudder, you cannot see it) in the proper direction, and that the dive brakes open and close/lock properly. Proper control hook up is checked after assembly of the glider. During the contest, a pilot's signature must be on the left side wing tape confirming a critical assembly check was accomplished. This means controls were moved, with another knowledgeable holding the control surface, to verify proper direction of throw and that the control was physically hooked to the control stick in the cockpit. For example, you hold the stabilizer with both hands (one on top, one on the bottom) exerting a little pressure. The pilot moves the stick forward and aft voicing his position with the person holding the stab. The person holding the stab verifies it is moving the proper direction and opposes this motion. If the stab wasn't connected properly, when you put the stick aft you would see no movement of the stab. The ship was not disassembled after the contest, and I know, a critically assembly check was accomplished on the glider by a very experienced pilot and his signature was on the wing tape. We don't launch gliders during a contest without that signature. It's in the contest rules because in the past, pilot's have lost their life getting distracted.

Sending the logs to DC makes no sense. Go on this website <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/rec.aviation.soaring> and look under Seminole-Lake Accident. You can see the comments on this forum about the reputation of some of the accident investigators that people have run into investigating other glider accidents. I know of two accidents that the investigators lost the data from the flight logs due to mishandling of the devices. This data is unbelievably valuable to see exactly what happened. Even the son (the mishap tow pilot) of an FAA inspector (Vic Almeda, that I flew with very many times when I was a Line Check Airman for Delta) said today "Yeah I doubt those logs will get downloaded properly now". If the logs are still here, let me at least download the Nano log today! I'll go to the FSDO or anywhere else to get this done.