

PILOT STATEMENT

Accident Date 10/15/19

Tail Number: N6097G

Donny Shane O'Brien

Student Pilot Certificate Number: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Louisville, KY 40207
[REDACTED]

I departed KLOU on Tuesday 10/15/19 at approximately 12:45pm ET. The KLOU ATIS reported information Yankee with winds 170 at 5, altimeter 30.01, and runway 24 was in use.

Prior to takeoff I set the instruments and programmed my destination of 27K (Georgetown, KY) into the GPS. The GPS confirmed a heading of 96 degrees. As usual and as I was trained, I set the heading bug on the heading indicator to the departure runway heading which was 240 degrees.

After takeoff I turned to the crosswind leg at approximately 1000 feet MSL, then turned to the downwind leg at approximately 1500 feet MSL.

I continued to climb to 1700 feet MSL to leave the traffic pattern and engaged the auto pilot. I selected the NAV option on the auto pilot, which I was told would direct the plane to the heading on the GPS. However, the auto pilot directed the plane to the heading bug on the heading indicator which was set to 240 degrees. This caused the plane to momentarily turn and fly north-north east. ATC asked why I was flying that direction when I had requested an eastern departure. I responded that I was correcting course.

I then deactivated the auto pilot, turned the plane to the proper heading which was 96 degrees, reset the heading bug to 96 degrees, and then reengaged the auto pilot. At this point the auto pilot held the correct course. After leaving Class C airspace, I ascended to 3500 feet MSL. The remainder of the flight to 27K was uneventful.

Approximately 10 nautical miles out from 27K I checked the AWOS. The information reported winds 200 at 5 and altimeter 30.00. I determined that landing on runway 21 would be correct. I then began descending to 2200 feet MSL. I also made the radio call to Georgetown traffic reporting my tail number, location, and landing intentions. I did this throughout the remainder of the flight.

After flying over the runway midfield at approximately 2200 feet MSL, I performed a turn to enter the downwind leg of the traffic pattern. I also descended to 2000 feet MSL which is the pattern altitude at 27K.

When I was abeam the numbers of runway 21, I pulled power to 1500 rpm and extended the flaps 10 degrees. However, the flaps did not extend. I had this problem two lessons ago on 9/26/19 while performing a solo landing at Clark County airport and at that time reported the problem to my Cardinal Wings CFI, Austin Secor. I slid the flaps lever up and down and managed to get the flaps to extend.

I landed at 1:35pm ET. The landing was uneventful. I taxied to the fuel station and had the plane refueled. I have been told for several months that this plane (N6097G) was only drawing fuel from the left tank. This concerned me, even on such a short trip, so I had the plane refueled to the top.

I texted Austin and told him I had landed at 27K. I reported the problem with the flaps. He told me I can land without them. I told him I had managed to get them down. I told him I was refueling the plane and heading back.

During my preflight I noticed the winds were gusting slightly. In hindsight I should have called Austin to let him know and ask about the winds at KLOU. Austin told me before the flight that if I ever felt uncomfortable, I should call him and he would come pick me up. However, I decided I would wait and check the AWOS, but that I should return to KLOU before the winds got worse.

At 1:59pm ET, after completing the preflight, I checked the AWOS at 27K. The report was winds 220 at 8 and altimeter 29.98. This made me feel safe to take off and return to KLOU. However, I should have also checked the METAR at KLOU. I set the altimeter and programmed the GPS for the return flight to KLOU.

I took off a few minutes later from runway 21 and flew around the pattern, then exited the pattern on the downwind. I turned to 276 degrees, set the heading bug, and activated the auto pilot. I climbed to 2500 feet MSL for the return flight, made my last radio call to Georgetown Traffic, and continued back toward KLOU.

Approximately 10 nautical miles from KLOU I checked the ATIS. The report was information Oscar, winds 170 at 12, altimeter 29.95, runway 15 in use. I have only landed on runway 15 a few times, but knew the traffic pattern. I planned on entering the downwind at a 45 degree angle and continuing through the pattern as usual.

Approximately 5 nautical miles from entering Class C airspace, I began descending to 1700 feet MSL. Approximately 6 nautical miles from KLOU I made my first call to ATC reporting my tail number, position, and intention to land with information Oscar. ATC instructed me to enter left base for runway 15.

Approximately 3 miles from KLOU, I deactivated the auto pilot and descended to pattern altitude of 1500 feet MSL. I changed the heading bug to 150 degrees and began turning towards the downwind.

ATC requested that I enter left base. I confirmed that I was using left base, mistakenly thinking I was supposed to fly the normal pattern which includes left base. Around this time I also heard ATC clearing traffic for runway 24, which was confusing.

Once I was in the downwind and approaching the numbers on runway 15, ATC told me that I was meant to enter left base and since I hadn't done that I was delaying traffic from departing. I asked if they would like me to extend my downwind and ATC reported back "no".

When I was abeam the numbers I pulled back power to around 1500 rpms and attempted to extend the flaps 10 degrees. The flaps didn't extend and I had to move the lever up and down several times to make them extend. When they finally extended I was close to my usual turn to base. Just before I turned, ATC requested that I turn to left base immediately so awaiting traffic could depart. I responded that I would turn immediately, which I did.

After turning to base, I attempted to extend the flaps to 20 degrees. Again, the flaps didn't respond and I had to slide the lever up and down to get them to extend. At this point I realized my air speed was higher than my usual approaches, but I also needed to turn to final.

After turning to final I decreased the power a bit and managed to extend the flaps 30 degrees. I felt that I was too high and fast, but after pulling power to almost idle I was on the correct glide slope. I confirmed this by the red over white VASI lights.

As I approached the threshold I felt the cross wind blowing me toward the left. I felt it was becoming difficult to maintain the center line and worried I was being blown too far off the runway. I also felt I was too fast. In hindsight I should have gone full power and performed a go-around. However, I also felt pressured to land the plane and get out of everyone's way.

I pulled the power to idle after crossing the numbers, but pushed the nose down too quickly. The nose gear hit the runway first and I was also off centerline. The plane bounced back up and began to porpoise. I felt the plane getting higher and higher off the ground with each bounce and also felt the plane heading off to the left. As I was instructed, I attempted to pitch the nose up to lose airspeed. I was never instructed that a go-around could be performed after touching down. As the plane floated higher up, I was worried I would stall too high in the air and pitched the nose over. I must have pitched it too far over because the plane came down hard and by this point in the grass. I was worried I would hit the runway lights, but thought a grass landing was better than the alternative. Unfortunately, a culvert runs alongside runway 15. The plane continued into the culvert, the nose dug into the ground, and the plane flipped over – tail to nose.

I was held in place and hanging upside down by the seat belt. I never lost consciousness. I still had on my headset and the plane still had electrical power, but the engine had stopped. I considered radioing ATC, but I heard over the radio that an incident had occurred on the runway and emergency services were on route.

I waited until the two helicopter policeman arrived from the ramp near the terminal building. They saw the accident and ran over. They knocked on the window to ask if I was OK. Then one of them ask me to open my door, which I did. He held me in place while I unbuckled my seat belt, then lowered me down. I climbed out of the cockpit myself. Aside from a sprained wrist I was thankfully completely uninjured physically.