

Dan Baker  
Senior Air Safety Investigator  
AS-WPR

**Date:** June 11, 2023  
**Subject:** WPR23FA223, Lead Pilot Interview  
**Contact:** George Castalano

Mr. Castalano was flying as the lead pilot in a formation of 3 airplanes when the No. 2 airplane crashed while flying around the Superstition Mountains near Apache Junction, Arizona.

Mr. Castalano stated the plan was for the flight to go to Payson. Stewart [No. 2 airplane passenger] was to fly back to Falcon Field with Oliver [No. 3 pilot] after they ate there. They arrived Falcon Field about 6:30 AM and briefed the flight, and they departed about 7:40 AM.

Mr. Castalano said the sun was “not burning your eyes out” as they flew along the Superstition mountains and they were in a “relaxed extended trail” at about 500 ft AGL. Oliver radioed him that he saw a fireball at his 11 o’clock position and that the No. 2 airplane had crashed. He rejoined with Oliver and they flew back to Falcon Field. Mr. Castalano said depth perception was difficult at times along the mountains and stated he did not hear any distress radio calls from No. 2.

Mr. Castalano said he met Simon (No. 2 pilot) for the first time at Pylon Racing School (PRS) earlier that week. He said it was Simon’s first year at PRS and that he had passed the course.

Dan Baker  
Senior Air Safety Investigator  
AS-WPR

**Date:** June 13, 2023

**Subject:** WPR23FA223, Apache Junction, AZ

**Contact:** Olivier Langeard, No. 3 Formation Pilot

Mr. Langeard was piloting the No. 3 airplane in formation with the accident airplane (N759F) and was interviewed via telephone on June 11, 2023, and in person on June 12, 2023. The following record of conversation combines his statements from both conversations.

Mr. Langeard had met the pilot the previous week while attending Pylon Racing Seminar at Reno, Nevada. He said the training included formation and low level flying. He said he was flying in the No. 3 formation position with the accident pilot and one other Epsilon (airplane) piloted by Mr. George Castalano the day of the accident. The plan was for Mr. Castalano to lead the formation on a sightseeing flight around the Superstition Mountains and then fly to Payson, AZ for lunch. After lunch the accident pilot was to continue his cross-country flight home to Delaware and the passenger in the No. 2 airplane would fly back to the Phoenix area with Mr. Langeard.

Mr. Langeard said the accident airplane was loaded with full fuel, baggage, and the pilot and passenger when they took off from Falcon Field, and that the CG may have been aft. He said the luggage was located behind the passenger. He noted the accident pilot asked the flight to slow down during a rejoin after departure and that the accident airplane was struggling to keep up.

The flight took spacing as they descended towards the mountains. He said the terrain was gorgeous, but he was struggling with depth perception and didn't understand everything he was seeing with the terrain. He said he flew further away from the terrain and higher than the other two airplanes.

Mr. Langeard said that while flying at a low altitude he saw the No. 2 airplane pass under the nose of his airplane from right to left. He said he saw the airplane nose pitch up and down, but said the trajectory of the airplane did not change before it impacted terrain. He said he did not see the airplane doing any aerobatics and he thought the airplane had a more acute angle towards the terrain than he did