

# THE NATIONALS

Jan 2015 | Waikerie | South Australia

## Last Two Days

Chad was in 6th position at the end of day 3 of competition. His goal was to take no risks and hope that the weather kept improving. I wished him well when he took off. I drove in to Waikerie to fill the car with petrol and do the last of my food shopping. When I returned to the club house I watched Chad's progress on my computer and chatted with other ground crews about how each pilot was faring. The weather improved as the day progressed. Cumulous clouds were building at mid levels and Chad used them to his advantage. He landed very upbeat because his time was quite quick. He knew his flight times would be up there with the leading pilots. His exuberance was warranted because he came 3rd on the day which pushed his position up to 3rd overall. Only Matthew Scutter and Adam Woolley were ahead of him, and Mac but, as an international pilot, he was not in the running for selection on the national team.

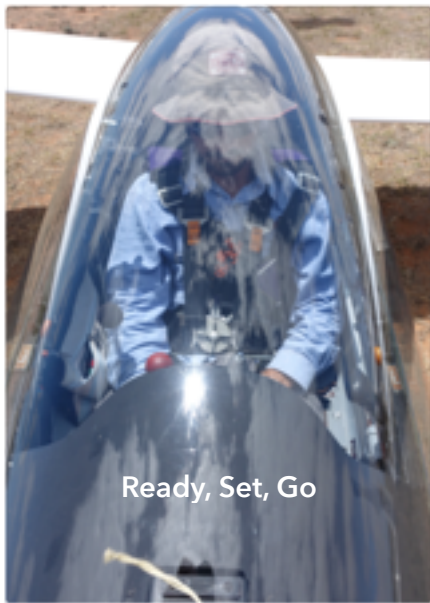
The final tense day arrived. As soon as the task was announced all hell broke loose. The task set was crazy as it included flying over 65kms of unlandable terrain. If pilots entered some legs at less than 3000ft then out landings would be dangerous. The task setter just happened to be a local pilot who knew the area well plus he was only 50 points behind the leader. It was stupid to expect pilots not to go for broke to get maximum points and jeopardise their safety. So, after a huge pilot outcry, a new, less risky, task was set. The day then went from bad to worse when a number of top pilots were accused of "team flying". This is not allowed under the rules. The complaint was quite serious and was eventually resolved . It left the leading pilots very aggrieved.



## Memorable Moments

Nationals always have funny situations. On the last day pilots were confronted with two uniformed "ballast checkers" asking for drivers to "pull over" to test "parking" skills. Overweight gliders or inability by drivers to place glider wheels on the small weighing scale meant a ticket!!!!

Then there was Alan Barnes, who was winning by over 200 points in his class on the last day only to experience a terrible final day flight. Arriving at the airfield some 2.5hrs after everyone else had landed he was heard to say on the radio "what a great day - it looks like everyone has outlanded expect me!" How wrong he was. All gliders had already been de-rigged and stowed into trailers. Alan's disasterous day meant he was behind by 10 points until, luck would have it, the only outlanding score came in and devalued the day further for Allan to be crowned champion by 10 points. Miracles happen!!



Ready, Set, Go



Contemplating tactics



Flat out racing



The sky's the limit

## There Will Always Be a Next Time

Chad spent considerable time before take off contemplating a strategy to tackle the task and to maintain his position but as soon as he landed he sensed that he had taken the wrong option. Lessons are always learned the hard way. Instead of flying his own race, like he normally does, Chad stuck to the lead group. He realised too late that they were more intent on playing tactics with each other than winning this race. Once he realised he had made a serious miscalculation he took off on his own in utter disgust. He flew surprisingly well over the first two legs until he came to the final turn. Flying on your own is never fun because he unfortunately missed the last thermal that the other competitors found as a group. Chad limped home in lowly 11th place. The sad part was that his poor finish devalued his overall position to 5th out of 14 and lifted Terry Cubley and Craig Collins above him. Chad was disappointed but his spirits eventually lifted. 5th out of 14 was still very admirable. I predict his luck will turn and he will end up on the podium at the next Nationals. Nationals are all about learning valuable lessons about life and flying. The experiences he's had this time around will stand him in good stead for future competitions.



Notice the glider? Great shot of KYF.  
Pity the people got in the way.



Fellow competitors relaxing in the heat. You would never guess this guy is Chief of Australia's Air Force

