

feel the strings

BY ROB MC MILLAN

At this years Technical Conference the APF were privileged to host several guest speakers, notably John Le Blanc from Performance Designs and Brian Germain from Big Air Sportz. They spoke about a range of topics both in seminars and socially around the bar. There were a few notable topics, including accident prevention and grass roots education i.e. what should we be teaching our students about being a pilot?

Accident Prevention

Far too often when an accident has occurred we use hindsight to examine the steps that led to the consequence. You could analyse the physical actions of the individual eg. a sharp front riser manoeuvre in one direction followed by an immediate hard toggle action in the opposite direction led to the individual developing line twists at a low altitude causing the individual to lose control of the wing and impact heavily. Or you might examine the state of mind of the individual leading up to the accident. If you did then you might be able to classify them into five types of people.

Anti authority. These people tend not to listen to their peers that have recognisable authority and defy all common sense suggested to them. Such people are not necessarily stupid, they just don't like to be told that their actions may be stupid. These people tend to be very stubborn and need to be reminded regularly to take a long hard look at their actions.

Impulsive people have a tendency to get charged up by spur of the moment thoughts. They don't take the time to consider the possibilities, nor consider the consequences of their choice of actions. "I can swoop past that cameraman that I spotted moments ago". "I just saw someone swoop downwind past the hangar. I'll give it a go too."

Invulnerable people are otherwise known as being bullet proof. For reasons unbeknown to common man, some people believe that they can dodge bullets 'Matrix' style, where in reality they are have a large red target painted on their chest. Invulnerable people are probably more vulnerable than everyone else because they are too caught up in where they want to go rather than where they are actually going. They tend to be interested in getting to their destination quickly rather than enjoying the journey along the way.

Macho people tend to speak for themselves and talk themselves up while doing so. An individuals 'macho-ness' or ego inflates beyond their actual skill level. Testosterone/Oestrogen levels may tend to be so inflated that their belief that 'I can do this' obscures the reality of 'I am sitting behind the eight ball waiting to be sunk'. Macho people tend to jump parachutes that are beyond their skill level and jump in conditions beyond their ability.

Resignation leads to devastation. After committing yourself to any particular style of landing, you begin to travel on the

recovery arc towards your destination point. Suddenly the image of what you believe is happening is rapidly becoming disbelief and you resign yourself to giving up and do nothing. It goes without saying that if you want to have an accident then the simplest thing to do is nothing.

Of course there are antidotes to these problems. Listen to the instructors and experienced pilots at your DZ. Always have a flight plan and an alternate place to land. Consider that an accident could happen to you and learn as much about the events that have lead to accidents at your DZ and others. Never, ever give up flying, until the very end. If your mates try to tell you to pull your head in, then please listen to them, because they wouldn't be saying it to you if there were nothing to say. Mates always try to look after their mates.

John's best advice that he could give to everyone about his or her choice of parachute, he jested, is just like a good marriage... "Love the one that you are with". He encourages everyone he meets to spend at the very least, a year on the type and size of canopy that you have. At least by that stage you will have had the opportunity to experience a whole range of conditions and seasons. After which you'll hopefully decide to spend some more time exploring its dynamics.

Brian reminded us that as instructors and experienced jumpers we are constant thieves, stealing ideas and concepts to teach others. This is afterall a fundamental of teaching and learning; you become a better teacher by finding new ways to help others learn in a manner that suits their particular learning style.

Some jumpers say that they are conservative pilots and consider themselves as safe because all they do is the same style of approach regardless of conditions or circumstances. Brian refers to these pilot's as 'one trick ponies'. An informed pilot learns to understand and then realise that there is often more than one method to achieve the same outcome. For example, you might only know how to do a straight in approach. Though you could learn how to do a double front riser approach or even a deep-braked approach all performed in a straight in manner. Both styles of approaches obviously require knowledge, instruction and the development of skill. Yet many pilots choose not to seek the knowledge needed to perform new tricks. Don't be a 'One Trick Pilot'. Brian elaborated on many other topics, far too many to try to mention on one page. So do yourselves a favour; grab a copy of Brian Germain's Book, "The Parachute and it's Pilot".

It contains an incredible amount of useful information that is easy to read with practical insights to becoming a better canopy pilot.

His book is available from www.bigairsportz.com

