

49th Multi-class Nationals – Dalby - October 2010

Since this year is the third Dalby nationals I thought it might be interesting to look back on how the nationals have changed since 1994.

The 1994 nationals had 56 competitors and, I suspect, was one of the last big nationals. Over subsequent years the number of competitors declined until early this century when numbers were down to around 20 in total. Not surprisingly, the GFA Executive called a special meeting to consider the future of the nationals and how numbers could be increased. This led to a number of changes designed to attract more pilots to the nationals, including moves to make the nationals more attractive to less experienced pilots and pilots of lower performance aircraft. These changes included handicapping, amalgamated classes, more use of AATs, lay days and pilot pairs.

Given the organisers of the 2004 Dalby nationals were involved in this process, we set out to give full effect to these changes and attract as many competitors as possible. This resulted in a field of 54 gliders, the largest since Dalby in 1994. Thankfully this resurgence in interest has continued and recent nationals that have set a maximum entry list of 60 have often been fully subscribed.

The expectation for Dalby 2010 is that it will be fully subscribed with a maximum of 60 entries, including 10 international entries.

It will be interesting to see how many of the previous Dalby winners return to defend their status. At the 1994 nationals the Australian Champions were Open Class Paul Mander, 15 Metre Class David Jansen and Standard Class Bruce Taylor. Of course there was no 18 Metre Class back then.

At the 2004 nationals the Australian Champions were Open Class Bruce Taylor, 18 Metre Class Bob Ward, 15 Metre Class Shane McCaffrey and Standard Class Miles Gore-Brown. Of these previous champions all but Miles are on the expression of interest list for Dalby 2010. Bruce Taylor has the biggest challenge in front of him, can he become a three time Dalby Champion? If he does the mayor might give him the keys to the town.

In looking back over the past 16 years, task setting has changed. Back in 1994 it was all speed tasks, and then as described above we moved to more AATs. Recent nationals have indicated a move back to more speed tasks. With increased numbers attending, there are now less low performance aircraft to consider and if Waikerie is any indication the pilots of lower performance gliders are happy to be flying more speed tasks. Mind you, if you can come fourth in 15 metre class in a Speed Astir, then maybe it doesn't really matter.

To finish this month's article, an update on how organisation is progressing. We have over 60 expressions of interest lodged to date. We are making good progress with securing tugs and the experience of last years Easter competition is being reviewed to see what we can learn.

Please check the website for the latest updates,
<http://www.ddsc.org.au/dalby2010/index.html>.

Ralph Henderson

rhenderson@inet.net.au