

Being a Timer / Caller

After recently doing an experiment during an F3k competition where we had no favourite timers/caller and had to draw a timer out of a hat showed that we lack in training and helping people become good callers for the soaring discipline here in NZ.

I will write a few of my thoughts and experiences calling for various people over the last few years. I have been lucky over the last few years to have called for lots of world class pilots too many to rank or name so I can offer some suggestions but none of its fact and others may like to do things different or a better suggestion which I hope at some stage to learn about.

Check your flight task and check you are in this group!

Stop watches: There's heaps of different timing units around I find the best to date is the Seiko stopwatch as you can preset a flight time on it and have the last three seconds bleep with your call for precision landing and they are correct. (some even expensive stop watches are one second out!) More than one stopwatch on hand or a board is best so you can run a working time and maybe time another contestant if you need to or use for the next quick turnaround flight. You should always have a working time.

Timing board: this is handy to have I have an aerial attached with a small wind indicator on it to help some pilots the aerial I use more for pointing out stuff to the pilot like air or other planes etc. I also have attached paper on a bulldog clip and a pen! All must have tools if you are a timer/caller and you need to know your own gear and how it works – believe me the last thing you want do is make a timing mistake on operating a watch or timing someone incorrectly it's what we all fly competitions for – the best result we can achieve.



Pilot/Caller: From when you walk out as a timer/caller you need to have clearly discussed with the pilot the task and or any possible other intentions such as if its F3J get ready it may be a Zoom launch or rocket launch be ready to get the time started! If its F3b and distance some like the on course time and each turn how the time is winding down...Do not pre-empt the watch look at the watch and ensure a smooth call voice at very regular time calls (some pilots even carry their own watch on the transmitter) which is a good idea as a double check on time and also if the timer is busy say clearing a winch the pilot can take care of time if it allows so.

Landing: The caller needs to ensure he is regularly advising pilot of time to go I start from one minute out to advise the pilot every 5 seconds down to 30second to go then count clearly down to zero every second. I believe the caller/timer must always count down to zero so practice this it's a very clear thing to the pilot (counting up to some unknown number is not a great thing to understand while trying to land an aeroplane on zero?)

Calling: One of the most important jobs firstly is to try as a caller timer to ensure you have your eye on all the aeroplanes in the sky especially the ones behind the pilot (he will never see these!) I usually watch the pilots plane very little and feed information to the pilot to filter out what he needs. You need to try and be aware of everything ground signs (trees grass flags bugs etc) also advise on wind shifts and anything else going on. There are heaps of great videos on this this stuff from radiocarbonart.com

If as a caller, you have made a timing mistake tell the pilot earlier than later ensure you are honest about it to him, so things don't go south later.

One of your last jobs as a caller / timer is to ensure the pilots time / landing and height(if F5J) is recorded clearly in the correct column, group, pilots name - Again clearly remember someone else must transpose this result to a computer or something and it needs to be very legible.

Most of all Have Fun!!!!!!