

An Addendum to the Old Buzzard's Soaring Rules **By Jay S. Deckeruzz**

Dave Thornburg's soaring rules are great! There isn't a single rule that should be deleted or otherwise adulterated. However, I've found a few more rules that ring of truth to me and thought I might share them (including prejudices) with you?

Fly with pilots that fly better than you do.

Some might think that this a bit masochistic, but if you can set your ego aside, you'll find that your flying will soon begin to step up toward their level. You'll be learning from them all the time, if you pay attention to the details of how they fly. You will also be able to directly ask them for help after they have watched you fly for a while.

As it often is in many sports, the best pilots might tend to be a little more serious, sometimes more quite and tend to almost sneak out to field to fly by themselves. So, when you approach one of the best pilots in the club about flying with him, be prepared to step into his world at the flying field and don't be a distraction to his flying - and be patient, the benefits of flying with them will come with time.

When starting to fly at contests, find a "coach".

A, as in one - not two or six, but one coach can help make getting into flying at contests easy and rewarding. The trick is finding the right person to be your coach.

Logistically, you need them to be at the events. But, more importantly you need a coach to "mesh" with you personally. Unfortunately, the best pilots are frequently not very good coaches, which actually might be good, since there would not be enough of them to go around. Select a person that is willing to be your coach, you trust, you respect, find supportive, flies as well or better than you and you feel that work intimately with.

Don't build when you can fly.

The folks in Southern California might need dispensation from this one, but here, as in most of the rest of the country, there are plenty of days where building is an option and flying isn't. It doesn't matter how great what you have on the building board might be, if you have something to fly and the weather allows it - Go Fly! Your flying skill will progress more and you'll have more fun than building on a new airplane will get you in the same 3 hours.

Get your eyes checked (and glasses, if you need them).

In my opinion, there are three basic qualities that are requisite to becoming an excellent pilot, a high degree of basic intelligence, good judgment and good eyesight. The first two you can't do much about, but the optometrist can help you out with the eyesight.

Fly handlaunch.

Dave Thornburg said that there is more to learn about yourself and your plane below 50 feet than above 50 feet - it's true. Any proficiency you develop flying handlaunch gliders (HLG) will further your flying ability of any other class of plane. Your mistakes will be right in front of your face and your successes, e.g., hooking a thermal, will bring a smile to your face every time for the rest of your life. If you don't have the arm to heave a HLG, get one of those short high-starts - it doesn't matter how you get up - Just Do It! In thermal duration contest flying, I have found that flying HLG seems to make getting the flight time a piece of cake and has also taught me quite a bit about setting up a good landing approach.

Keep a good flying airplane (no matter what).

I learned to fly RC with an Olympic II that I built after finishing graduate school. Took my time building it and it flew great. After flying the Oly for a couple of years, I wanted to fly something faster with more servos. Pretty soon I had a couple of other airplanes and didn't fly the Oly anymore. So, I sold it. Soon thereafter I crashed those other airplanes and had nothing to fly for quite awhile. I still miss that Oly today.

Fly faster airplanes.

If you are able to learn how to fly faster airplanes effectively, do it. You can launch higher, and fly at a higher airspeed. Airspeed is your freedom to search the sky for lift with wild abandon. I'd rather search three times as much air trying to find lift and land twenty seconds earlier with a fast airplane than to get the extra twenty seconds a slow airplane - to be read, I rather die soon trying to find lift than hangout a little longer to inevitably sink out because the plane does not have the ability to even try.

The airplane characteristics I'm currently prejudiced towards for thermal duration airplanes are:

- The best airfoil compromises for good thermal performance with a good top end speed range tend to have a thickness around 8.5 percent and around 2.5 percent camber, e.g., SD 7080 and MH 32 (among many others).
- The plane must be kept as aerodynamically clean as possible, including little (a half a degree or less) or no washout.
- The plane still has to be stable.

You get out of it what you put into it.

I've met Joe Wurts and seen him fly several times. He is a great guy and a truly phenomenal pilot. However, I do not find Joe Wurts to be a phenomenal natural "talent". Joe possesses the three requisite qualities to be a great pilot, a high degree of basic intelligence, good judgment and he's been to the optometrist. What makes him the phenomenal pilot is not raw talent, but the effort that he has put into becoming a phenomenal pilot over many years. Joe is the example of what us no talents can achieve if we apply enough dedicated effort.