



## Safe Flight School Course review Written May 2006

**After attending the girl's canopy course in April, I now have it on good authority that although my landing consistency has plummeted, my entertainment value has increased exponentially! So much so that my CCI is setting up some spectator seating alongside my regular landing area... ;)**

Seriously though, I think when you change the way you do something so radically you should expect to have to build consistency all over again. It's not dissimilar to when you change your body position from boxman to mantis... you have to breakdown all the bad habits to build the new.

As far as my current landings go, I am trusting that the grass stains (not enjoyed by my rig for years) will eventually fade and that my friends will stop laughing at me soon! As for Brian Vacher, I still swear at him after every bad landing, but only because he left me unable to blame all the things I previously blamed (e.g. crosswind, turbulence etc.). Instead I hear his voice telling me how I flared unevenly, played with the canopy rather than letting it fly or got that lift simply because 'I asked for it'!

"The canopy only knows relative wind Caroline and it will always fly straight unless you tell it otherwise..."

Damn, damn, damn!!!

I would definitely recommend the course to anyone. To any girls out there though, if you want to do a canopy course don't feel you should wait until the next girl's course (although I did make a bunch of fantastic new female friends!). Everyone learns in this environment and by its nature I don't think anyone puts themselves on a canopy course because they think they already 'know it all'. I have nearly 2000 jumps and I can honestly say that anything I thought I knew was soon shot down in flames (it would actually be kind of fun to see that happen to a few guys in the sport!!).

The girls I was on the course with all had significantly less jumps than me but we all learnt at the same rate, were surprised by the same things and came away applying the same knowledge in a similar way. The only difference from my perspective was how much harder I have made it for myself by being sucked towards a much smaller and more sensitive canopy before I really had the skills to handle it properly. Right now I sure wish it was a Sabre 150 not a Crossfire 99!!!! I also wish I'd done the course a lot earlier. I sincerely believe that if I had, I wouldn't have ended up injured after a landing in January 2004.

The course itself teaches you to plan what you are doing under canopy much more intelligently. It provides you with the skills to land exactly where you want to - every time! In fact it makes other people's flying seem very random afterwards! Most importantly though, it teaches you an enormous range of inputs you can apply to any given situation. All exercises are practiced up high and you are encouraged to understand the effect of the inputs on your altitude loss and ground speed. In doing this, without realising it, you start to build confidence in your canopy and a toolkit of responses to a range of different situations you

might face. In some cases it is clear that knowing how and when to use these tools, plus what it takes to make them work, could even save your life.

If you're nervous under canopy or simply want to be a better canopy pilot, do a canopy course! Definitely don't leave it as long as I did! The Safe Flight School course is not the only one out there, but it is a good one from my experience and if you can't get over to Empuriabrava there are other locations to choose from. There are also SFS courses now being run out of Langar by Mike Gorman. See [www.safeflightschool.com](http://www.safeflightschool.com) for details.

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[www.skydivechoreography.com](http://www.skydivechoreography.com)

***Skydive Choreography recommends Safe Flight School***