

Choosing a harness for accuracy

ANDY WEBSTER DISCUSSES WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN SELECTING A HARNESS FOR ACCURACY WORK

As with paragliders (see September Skywings), there isn't really a best harness for accuracy. Pilots have different sitting positions and accuracy flying styles, but from what I have picked up, and from speaking to others, I have put together some headings to consider when looking for a harness for accuracy.

Harness certification. For FAI competitions, harnesses and back protector combinations need to be in a configuration that has been tested to either LTF09 or EN1651 2018, so make sure you purchase a compliant harness. To assist pilots in conforming to this rule the FAI has compiled a table of compliant harness and back protector combinations (find it at <https://tinyurl.com/y336vr7b>). The table is useful, but not necessarily up to date with the latest harnesses; suppliers and pilots are encouraged to advise where a new harness can be added to the list.

Harness size. Common sense should apply here, but make sure you get the correct size harness for your weight, remembering that paraglider certification flights will have taken place with distance between the harness carabiners set dependent on pilot weight ranges. For accuracy you need quite a snug fit; sliding about in the harness can destabilise your final approach.

Falling and harness strike. Two essential aspects, when landing in paragliding accuracy competitions, are not to fall over and not to get a harness strike, both of which result in a maximum score. Elementary harnesses that offer an upright sitting position are therefore the best for paragliding accuracy. There is less chance of falling over and your legs will be dangling a lot lower than the harness seat, reducing the chance of a harness strike. Such harnesses also allow the best movement of your

legs, giving greater reach to the target. Pod harnesses that have a laid-back sitting position should be avoided, along with bulky airbag harnesses. Under-seat reserves can also add to the harness bulk, although this was never an issue for me when I used to fly a UP Nanga harness.

Sitting up. Fully tightened side straps will give the most upright sitting position, but this is not the most comfortable position for long flights. Having a harness where you can sit back, but which allows you to get into an upright position easily, is ideal. I currently fly a Supair Access Back harness that provides a very upright position when the side straps are fully pulled in; however I have reclined it sufficiently to be comfortable for soaring flights, and it still allows me to easily get forward for landing. One thing to watch out for though is slipping back into the seat when applying brake pressure.

Weight shift. All harnesses will weight shift. This can have a negative effect in accuracy when reaching down for the target and your paraglider suddenly turns to one side, away from the target. Harnesses with low suspension points will weight shift the most, so avoid these and look for ones that have suspension points at around chest level. Adjustments can be made to minimise the weight-shift effect, but it may take a bit of trial and error to get the best set-up.

Bulk and weight. Another consideration is your personal preference between a bulky foam-filled harness and an airbag harness when transporting equipment. An airbag harness will pack down nicely, whereas a foam-filled one can be a bit of a pain when you have to squeeze it into transport or airport conveyor belts. On the other hand, a foam-filled harness will offer more protection than a half-inflated air bag if you were to ever be dragged backwards on the ground. A good compromise is the Karpofly Arrow X-Alps paraglider harness that uses an inflatable

airbag protector. This is inflated before launch by blowing into a tube and can be deflated with a valve for packing away.

Most pilots will prefer a lightweight harness for carrying up to launch, especially when there can be multiple accuracy flights in one day. A review of manufacturers' harness weights is always worthwhile.

Popular harnesses. As an indicator of good harnesses for accuracy, I have listed below FAI-compliant harnesses seen regularly on the competition circuit in Europe. All the harnesses are elementary or recreational styles. I imagine there are many more on the market that are just as suitable.

- Advance Axess 3 and 4
- BGD Snug
- Karpofly Arrow X-Alps 3 and 4*
- Sky Gii 3 and 4 Alpha
- Skywalk Cult 2 and 3
- Supair Access Back Bumpair
- UP Nanga 2

Summary. To fly in FAI accuracy competitions it is essential that your harness has a LTF09 or EN1651 rating, as well as being the correct size for you. Elementary/recreational style harnesses are best suited for accuracy flying, especially ones with an upright sitting position. Lightweight harnesses with low bulk are also useful when lugging equipment around at competitions. Avoid pod harnesses, bulky air bags and harnesses with low suspension points.

* Note: Karpofly equipment is no longer available new.

Marketa Tomaskova flying a Karpofly Arrow X-Alps harness

Photo: Andrew Webster



Dragan Popov flying a Sky Gii Alpha harness

Photo: Andrew Webster



Kamil Konecny flying a Sky Gii Alpha harness

Photo: Klara Madasova



Matjaz Sluga flying a Supair Access Back harness

Photo: Andrew Webster

