

# Classic Accuracy target approaches

## Part 1: The early part of the approach

Experienced pilots John Lawrence, Les Carroll and Dave Crowhurst need no introduction to those on the accuracy scene. Each was asked for their thoughts on various stages of a target approach. Their responses were so thorough that two articles have been created. The first part covers the approach up to and including turning onto finals. The second article will concentrate on the final approach to the target.

Please note that the comments relate to how experienced pilots fly to the target. New pilots should not attempt to fly with deep brake or near the stall point in early flights.

### Do you have a pre-flight routine?

**John Lawrence.** Ten minutes before a flight I like to check kit, put shoes on, focus on the target and wind and think about visualising landing on the spot.

**Les Carroll.** Before a flight I prepare equipment, watch other flights if possible and carry out foot placement practice on a small pad. I also prepare a flight plan that will depend on the tow.

**Dave Crowhurst.** Set up a routine and stick to it wherever possible, and have a flight plan in your head. Have your kit ready and get into it in good time for your flight – being in a



All photos: Arthur Bentley

Two-time National Classic Accuracy Champion John Lawrence

rush will disrupt your routine and you won't have time to mentally prepare. Where possible I take the opportunity to watch pilots on approach, seeing where they set up and the angle of approach, but keeping in mind that they may be flying a different-sized canopy. You should know the ground windspeed (if not measured then feel what it's doing), but note winds at 50ft upwards will generally be stronger and you need to know if this is the case. I will also do a few foot placements onto a dummy pad prior to going to the launch gate, and whilst in the gate awaiting a tow line. Prior to launch, look at the windsocks at the target and the launch. At this point concentrate on the launch and just keep in mind what you saw at the target.

### How does your approach vary with wind speed?

**John Lawrence.** I use the wind speed to get to the right bit of the sky at the right height.

**Les Carroll.** All approaches should be at a 45-degree angle, whether long or tight to the target; it's what we call the flying the wire. If the winds are high you turn in closer as the canopy drive will be affected maintaining the 45-degree angle. If the winds are low you will turn out further as the canopy will be flying faster, maintaining the 45 degree angle and height.



Four times national parachuting champion and world-level semi-finalist Les Carroll

**Dave Crowhurst.** If it is windy the angle of approach to the target will be steeper, whereas with low winds your approach will be shallower.

### Where is your preferred release point?

**John Lawrence.** I like to release upwind and to one side of the target which allows me options for a penetration check and turning on to finals.

**Les Carroll.** I am new to towing, and the only opportunity that I have had is to release from the side. I think this depends on where the tow line is set up and wind direction.

**Dave Crowhurst.** Your flight should be off to the side of the target, similar to the tow vehicle route. If it is windy you need to be past the target on release. If the winds are low you are likely to get less height and your release point doesn't need to be past the target. Don't stay on the tow line too long hoping for more height. Remember that you have to come back and turn into wind for finals.

### Do you do a penetration check?

**John Lawrence.** If there is sufficient time I will do a penetration check, but I am not that bothered about doing one.

**Les Carroll.** If I can see the winds aloft are strong and I have the height I would do a penetration check. I will never do one behind the target, in low winds or if I do not have altitude.

**Dave Crowhurst.** Once off the tow, settle the canopy on 1/4 brakes and do a wind check, looking for the point on the ground where there is no movement towards or away from you. This will be your approach angle. If you have had a poor tow and will struggle to get to the target don't prolong the wind check.



Two times national parachuting champion and three times national parasailing champion Dave Crowhurst

### What information do you use to assess wind speed?

**John Lawrence.** I use the windsock at the target.

**Les Carroll.** I watch other canopies, windsocks ... and experience.

**Dave Crowhurst.** If it's windy then you will climb faster on tow. If you get an increase in tension at a point in the tow this could indicate an increase in the upper wind speed. Make a note of the height as you'll come out of that on the way down.

### Do you use any inflight information?

**John Lawrence.** I take in what the windsock is doing, and feel the strength of the wind on my face during a tow and compare this to the perceived wind. From this I will decide the line for finals and release point.

**Les Carroll.** If you have altitude you can set up upwind of the target and let the canopy fly on full drive. You can see how fast you cover the ground, and from this determine where to turn in for finals – this comes with experience. I also keep my eye on the streamer.

**Dave Crowhurst.** The tow can be used to gain more information on the wind and the conditions. Is the flight smooth or bumpy, are you flying straight or having to correct direction, is there any smoke in the distance indicating the wind speed/direction/wind gradients?

### Do you like a long or short finals?

**John Lawrence.** I prefer a short finals so there is not much time to mess up, but it's a fine line.

**Les Carroll.** In my experience this depends on the conditions, but in general I prefer a long finals.

**Dave Crowhurst.** As you become more experienced you may choose to do your finals from a lower height, but to start you want the height to allow plenty of time to make controlled adjustments.

### How do you judge when to turn in on finals?

**John Lawrence.** Always be hot as you can sort this situation out. If you are too cold you have no chance of reaching the target.

**Les Carroll.** As a guide, turning onto finals should be around 400ft; how close to the target will depend on the wind conditions. I don't practice this, but for some reason just know when to turn in on finals, and I can feel the pressure of the canopy through my hands. It is important to maintain your altitude when flying to the target. This is easier to manage when jumping out of planes from altitude.

**Dave Crowhurst.** Aim to turn into wind, facing the target, at 300 - 400ft on 1/4 brakes. Use the angle from the wind check done before as your reference angle, but also assess the wind during your downwind and crosswind legs and adjust your flight plan as necessary. Also check the target windsock: does it indicate the same direction as when you launched or has it changed? Keep your eyes on the target; turns should be towards the target to avoid losing sight of it. Always make sure you can reach the target when setting up; you can slow the canopy down but you are very limited on what you can do to make it go faster, and then it is without very much control.

Compiled by Andy Webster