

# Classic Accuracy target approaches

## Part 2: Finals and landing

In Part 1, experienced pilots John Lawrence, Les Carroll and Dave Crowhurst were asked for their thoughts on various stages of a target approach. Their responses were so comprehensive as to merit two articles. The first part, in the March issue, covered the approach up to and including turning onto finals. This second instalment covers 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.

### If you find you are not on the correct glide on finals, how do you adjust your flight?

**John Lawrence.** If I am too hot in the wrong bit of sky I will perform flat S-turns. If you are low it's a bit late in the day to correct big time, but it's never over till it's over so don't give up – except for safety.

**Les Carroll.** When you turn on finals, flying at roughly half brakes will allow you time to react to the two common scenarios. If you are too high, instantly apply brakes, get the canopy on the wire – ie at a 45-degree angle to the target – and back to half brakes. If you see that you are short, let the canopy fly and get on the wire. If you are too low this probably can't be achieved, hence the guideline of turning in on finals at 400ft.

**Dave Crowhurst.** If the target is running away from you decrease the amount of brake. If you're going to overfly it increase the amount of brake, or put in an S-turn early whilst you have height. Any turn should be flat and steady, but don't turn your back to the target and lose sight of it.

### What brake setting do you prefer on finals?

**John Lawrence.** I use half to three-quarter brakes.

**Les Carroll.** On finals I prefer to be on half brakes for most approaches, but in high winds due to my lighter weight I would work at around three-quarter brakes. In high winds the common mistake is to touch the brakes early.

**Dave Crowhurst.** I use quite deep brakes, but I would emphasise that new pilots should keep well away from the stall point until they have done lots of flights. For early flights I would suggest using a quarter to a half brakes.

### How do get around flying your eye to the pad?

**John Lawrence.** To negate the effects of parallax, move your foot to cover the target in your eyeline.

**Les Carroll.** It all starts with getting yourself in the right position on finals with half brakes, then keeping the pad in view between your legs. Keep on the 45 degree line, make smooth hand corrections, keeping the canopy flying, and then bring the pad to your heel/foot.

**Dave Crowhurst.** One vital thing to remember is this: if your eyes are flying directly to the disc you will land short. Your feet are approximately 5ft below your eyes and will land before your eyes get to the target!

### Do you have any routine in the later part of your flight?

**John Lawrence.** I prefer to be hot and perform a brief stall at a height that allows me to then drive in and drop on to the target.

**Les Carroll.** My routine is a steady finals, flying on the wire, and then a smooth transition to sink onto the target. The transition is an extension of the final approach. If you stay on the wire you have the ability to control the canopy by stopping it or letting it fly. On finals there should be minimal hand movement, but you



Photo: Arthur Bentley

Dave Crowhurst: 'Whatever plans you put in place, there's still an element of just-deal-with-it.'

must keep the canopy flying and pressurised at all stages up to the transition phase. It will then react to your hand movements and you retain control. It is important that from finals to the transition is one smooth motion, sinking on to the target under control!

**Dave Crowhurst.** To be set for the landing fly in a settled body position, with feet apart and ready to strike the disc with minimal body movement. Some pilots fly with legs crossed, but uncrossing them very late in the flight creates movement that can affect targeting. Stopping the canopy and transitioning into the drop must be smooth, and this will keep your canopy and your body position steady. Keep flying the canopy to take you to the target, and keep your head straight and facing the target. If your head is turning to look at the target then you are flying away from it. There are useful diagrams about angles and transitions on the Biff website at <https://eiff.com/manuals/accuracy.html>

Experienced pilots will be overflying the target and then dropping onto the target by stopping the canopy. This is the long-term goal, but if you don't have plenty of experience or are unsure, and are looking for a flared landing, you should be setting-up so that you fly to 100ft, then slowly go to full drive and do a flared landing. In this case you should aim to be short of the target; the full drive and flare will bring you to it.

### How do you place your heel on the pad?

**John Lawrence.** Look at your heel and focus. As Xavier de Sailly said, 'Drive through the zero.'

**Les Carroll.** I keep my legs steady and fly the pad to my heel. When I hit the dead centre I will be able to see the lower part of the yellow disc. Try to not reach for the pad as this extra movement will inevitably cost you centimetres, hence the expression – finish the flight!

**Dave Crowhurst.** Some accuracy jumpers will have their heel marked and watch the heel to the target, others have the strike point hidden so it is instinct; this is a personal preference. The most important point is to fly your canopy and body to the target, keep the foot steady and do not stab at the target at the last minute (easier said than done).

### Do you have any particular problems or conditions you do not like?

**John Lawrence.** I do not like nil wind, both for launching and landing where there's nothing to stop your drive.

**Les Carroll.** Due to my lighter weight and corresponding canopy size, high winds sometimes make it difficult. I have now downsized and hope this will help.

**Dave Crowhurst.** Nil winds are not my favoured conditions, as we don't get much opportunity to practice nil wind approaches. In the UK we seldom have real nil wind days, indeed most flying days are moderate to strong winds, so give me a bit of wind and I'm happier.

### What is the best canopy for accuracy, and does towing affect this choice?

**John Lawrence.** Biff Classic without a doubt.



Les Carroll: 'Finish the flight!'

**Les Carroll.** This is down to your preference, and there are several very good accuracy canopies out there. As far as I am aware, by following other jumpers, the accuracy canopies are working well in towing, from lightweight ladies to the heavy dudes.

**Dave Crowhurst.** Different canopies have different characteristics but they will all do the job of getting you accurately to the target and allowing a good strike, so it's really a matter of personal preference. I currently fly a PD Zero; it launches well and I'm comfortable with it. That's the important part of any canopy.

### Anything else important of note?

**John Lawrence.** I have always thought you can overthink your flight, and mess it up as you try to fly that pattern without feeling what you are doing. Flying has to be instinctive not mechanical, and you need to know your canopy to the nth degree. You must be able to fully stall at about the most muscular part of your arm movement, which for me is with my arms bent at right angles to the elbow so you can put the canopy into and out of stall with finesse. Just being able to reach stall at full arm extension puts you in a dangerous position as you cannot recover it quickly enough. Feel, feel, feel – don't think, think, think.

One other issue is using glasses. As I have got older I need to use varifocals to check my kit, but I have come a cropper flying with them so I tend to fly fixed-focus glasses.

**Les Carroll.** Coaching and good training camps are the best way to learn and progress. Flying the correct size canopy and being safe are also important.

**Dave Crowhurst.** Whatever plans you put in place, there's still an element of 'just deal with it' as there is always the 'I didn't expect that' scenario.



John Lawrence: 'It's never over till it's over!'