



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Huntsville, Alabama	Accident Number:	ERA20CA116
Date & Time:	March 1, 2020, 14:00 Local	Registration:	N296BA
Aircraft:	Let L 23 SUPER BLANIK	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of control in flight	Injuries:	2 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Instructional		

Analysis

According to the glider pilot, the purpose of the flight was to release from the tow about 300 ft above ground level, return to the airport, and land on the departure runway in the opposite direction, which would simulate the response to a "rope-break" emergency during the initial climb. After departure from the runway and release from the tow, the pilot completed a 270° turn on the north side of the runway and had to make another 90°, left base-to-final turn to return toward the runway. While still on the base leg, the glider encountered an 11-knot wind from the south, gusting to 18 knots. The pilot believed that the glider must have encountered "wind shear" as he "lost all elevator control," and the glider then impacted terrain. The Federal Aviation Administration inspector who conducted a postaccident examination of the glider reported that he established flight control continuity. The pilot reported that there were no preaccident mechanical malfunctions or failures with the glider that would have precluded normal operation.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

The pilot's failure to maintain glider control and his exceedance of the glider's critical angle of attack while maneuvering in gusting wind conditions, which resulted in an aerodynamic stall.

Findings

Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot
Aircraft	Angle of attack - Capability exceeded
Environmental issues	Gusts - Effect on operation

Factual Information

History of Flight

Approach	Other weather encounter
Approach	Loss of control in flight (Defining event)
Approach	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor; Private	Age:	69, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Rear
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Glider	Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Glider	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	April 23, 2019
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	1834 hours (Total, all aircraft), 295 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Let	Registration:	N296BA
Model/Series:	L 23 SUPER BLANIK No Series	Aircraft Category:	Glider
Year of Manufacture:	1994	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	948117
Landing Gear Type:	Tandem	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	March 30, 2019 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:	90 Hrs	Engines:	
Airframe Total Time:	1680 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	Huntsville Soaring Club	Rated Power:	
Operator:	Huntsville Soaring Club	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KMDQ,763 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	8 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	19:55 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	325°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	11 knots / 18 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	190°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.12 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	19°C / 3°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Huntsville, AL (3M5)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Huntsville, AL (3M5)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:		Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	Moontown 3M5	Runway Surface Type:	Grass/turf
Airport Elevation:	655 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	09	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	2180 ft / 160 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Simulated forced landing

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Serious	Latitude, Longitude:	34.747222,-86.46083(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Rayner, Brian
Additional Participating Persons:	Kenneth Lancaster; FAA/FSDO; Birmingham, AL
Original Publish Date:	June 29, 2020
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	This accident report documents the factual circumstances of this accident as described to the NTSB.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=101021

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