



Aviation Investigation Preliminary Report

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| Location: | Panacea, FL | Accident Number: | ERA24LA227 |
| Date & Time: | May 25, 2024, 21:55 Local | Registration: | N446KW |
| Aircraft: | BRALLIER SCOTT GLASAIR I | Injuries: | 1 Fatal |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General aviation - Personal | | |

On May 25, 2024, about 2155 eastern daylight time, an amateur built Glasair 1 RG, N446KW, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Panacea, Florida. The private pilot was fatally injured. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 personal flight.

All times used in this report have been converted to eastern daylight time.

About 1249 on the day of the accident, the pilot departed Zephyrhills Municipal Airport (ZPH), Zephyrhills, Florida, where he hangered his airplane, and flew to Destin Executive Airport (DTS), Destin, Florida, arriving about 1449.

Preliminary Air Traffic Control (ATC) data provided by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), indicated that the pilot departed DTS on his return flight and was receiving flight following services from ATC, enroute to ZPH. The airplane was initially transmitting a discrete beacon code of 1045, and remained on that code for the entire flight. Preliminary flight track data indicated that the airplane departed runway 14 at DST about 2101. After departure, the airplane made a left turn to the east-southeast and began climbing on course to a cruising altitude of about 6,500 feet. About 2149 the airplane’s ground speed and altitude began to fluctuate, and the track data indicated that the airplane made an abrupt right turn (about 90° of flight track change). It then entered a left turn, and about 2151, the altitude peaked at approximately 7,300 feet. The airplane then entered a counterclockwise spiraling descent. The airplane’s ground speed continued to fluctuate during the descent until track data was lost approximately 200 feet above the waters of Apalachee Bay.

Preliminary communications data indicated that at 2154, ATC had received a distress call from the pilot advising, “I’m going down in Apalachee Bay” shortly before radar contact was lost. An alert notice was issued by ATC at 2216. ATC then contacted the Leon County Sheriff’s Office, the Wakulla County Sheriff’s Office, and the FAA regional communications center, who then

coordinated with the United States Coast Guard (USCG) for search and rescue. About this time, another pilot that was on the same radio frequency offered to overfly the position where radar contact was lost. He was unable to see anything and reported that it was very dark and hazy.

On May 26, 2024, at 0028, during a search conducted by the USCG and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), the wreckage of the airplane was discovered in 13 to 15 feet of water, about 7 miles east of Bald Point State Park in Apalachee Bay. A marker buoy was placed on the wreckage. Imagery indicated that the airplane had come to rest on a sand shoal in a nose and left wing down position, with the empennage being visible above the water. Later that morning, divers from the FWC initiated victim recovery efforts, and about 1000, Sea Tow Big Bend located the marker buoy. Weather conditions then deteriorated, wind and wave action increased, and the wreckage was scattered.

On May 28, 2024, Sea Tow Big Bend was able to locate the nose section of the airplane using side scan sonar, and then tow it ashore. Officers from the Taylor County Sheriff's Office were also able to recover the wings with the carry through structure, one winglet, and the aft fuselage near the mouth of the Econfina River, after they had drifted away from the accident site.

On June 4, 2024, an examination of the recovered wreckage was conducted by the NTSB at the Taylor County Sheriff's Emergency Operations Center. Examination of the airplane revealed that, the aft fuselage (with the empennage still attached) had separated from the rest of the fuselage structure just aft of the instrument panel. The rudder was still attached to its hinge points. Both elevators were also still attached, with the left elevator displaying minimal damage and the right elevator's lower panel having been separated from the rest of the right elevator.

The windshield was missing, along with both gull wing doors. Both wings and the carry through structure were also separated from the fuselage. The left winglet was separated from the left wing and the pitot tube mast was separated from the bottom of the left wing. The left wing outboard fuel filler port was also missing, with its mounting location displaying evidence of the filler port having been hydraulically separated from the wing. The left wing's inboard fuel filler port was still intact, but an approximate 4-foot section of the left wing's upper composite surface near the inboard fuel filler port was missing. The right wing was missing its winglet. Both left and right main landing gear, and the nose landing gear were in the "UP" (retracted) position, and the wing flaps, were in the 0° (wing flaps up) position.

Examination of the pitot tube and static ports did not reveal any evidence of blockage, and flight control continuity was established from the rudder, elevator, and ailerons to the breaks in the system, and from the breaks in the system, to their respective flight controls.

Examination of the cockpit controls and instrumentation indicated that the throttle and, mixture controls were all in the full forward position. The carburetor heat control was in the "OFF" position, and the primer was in and locked. The landing gear switch was in the "UP"

(retracted) position, and the handle was broken off. The wing flap handle was in 0° (wing flaps up) position.

The manifold pressure gauge, and the tachometer were off-scale low. The airspeed indicator needle was frozen at around 190 knots. The vacuum driven attitude indicator displayed a nose down pitch attitude and left wing down roll attitude. The electric turn and bank indicator displayed a left bank. The directional gyro indicated 202-degrees, and the vertical speed indicator was frozen at a 600 foot per minute rate of descent indication.

The selector switches for the navigation lights, electric fuel pump, and turn and bank were all on.

The emergency locator transmitter (ELT) remained attached to its mounting location but was separated from its antenna. The ELT switch was found in the "OFF" position.

Examination of the propeller and engine revealed that one blade of the two-bladed Prince P Tip Composite propeller had separated during the impact sequence, the remainder of the propeller, which consisted of the hub and other blade, had remained attached to the propeller flange of the engine.

The engine had remained attached to some of the airplane's structure via the engine mount and firewall. Damage was noted to various exhaust tubes in the form of bends. Abrasion was visible on the ignition harness, and corrosion and various components of the engine displayed damage consistent with submersion in saltwater.

The top and bottom spark plugs were removed to release the engine oil and water mixture that was present in all four cylinders. Once all the water was removed, the drivetrain was able to be rotated via the propeller. Thumb compression and suction was evident on all four cylinders when the propeller was rotated, and all the rocker arms moved freely as the drivetrain rotated.

The oil suction screen was found tightly installed and safety wired to the sump. The screen was removed and found to be free and clear of debris. The oil filter was tightly installed, and safety wired to the rear of the engine. A date of May 9, 2022 was written on the oil filter canister. The filter was cut open and the filter portion was removed. The screen was found to be free of metallic debris, but carbon was noted within the filter element.

The engine driven fuel pump was found tightly installed to the accessory section of the engine, but the housing displayed a large amount of saltwater corrosion. Suction and compression were present at the inlet and outlet ports when actuated by hand. The fuel pump actuating rod also moved when the drivetrain was rotated.

Both magnetos were tightly installed to the accessory section of the engine. The magnetos were removed and the respective input drives were rotated by hand but did not produce any spark. Both units were disassembled and found to have large amounts of water, corrosion, and

a jelly like substance inside consistent with submersion in saltwater but did not display any evidence internally of preimpact failure or malfunction.

The carburetor was found attached to the lower side of the engine. The housing of the carburetor was fractured at the attach flange, but no other damage was noted. The mixture and throttle arms were found attached and in the full rich and full throttle positions. The brass carburetor floats were found attached with minor hydraulic crushing on one float. When shaken they did not produce any sound indicative of leakage. The fuel inlet screen was found free and clear of any debris.

According to FAA airworthiness records, the airplane received its special airworthiness certificate on November 20, 2011.

According to FAA airman records, the pilot held a private pilot certificate with a rating for airplane single engine land. His most recent third-class medical was issued on April 6, 2023. He reported on that date that he had accrued about 600 hours of total flight experience.

The recorded weather at Tallahassee International Airport (TLH), Tallahassee, Florida, located 30 nautical miles north of the accident site, at 2153, included: winds 260° at 3 knots, 10 miles visibility, few clouds at 6,500 ft, scattered clouds at 25,000 ft, temperature 28° C, dew point 22° C, and an altimeter setting of 29.91 inches of mercury.

The wreckage was retained for further examination.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Aircraft Make: | BRALLIER SCOTT | Registration: | N446KW |
| Model/Series: | GLASAIR I | Aircraft Category: | Airplane |
| Amateur Built: | Yes | | |
| Operator: | On file | Operating Certificate(s) Held: | None |
| Operator Designator Code: | | | |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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|---|-------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Conditions at Accident Site: | Unknown | Condition of Light: | Night |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | KTLH,56 ft msl | Observation Time: | 01:53 Local |
| Distance from Accident Site: | 30 Nautical Miles | Temperature/Dew Point: | 28°C /22°C |
| Lowest Cloud Condition: | Few / 6500 ft AGL | Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction: | 3 knots / None, 260° |
| Lowest Ceiling: | None | Visibility: | 10 miles |
| Altimeter Setting: | 29.91 inches Hg | Type of Flight Plan Filed: | |
| Departure Point: | Destin, FL (DTS) | Destination: | Zephyrhills, FL (ZPH) |

Wreckage and Impact Information

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|----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Crew Injuries: | 1 Fatal | Aircraft Damage: | Unknown |
| Passenger Injuries: | | Aircraft Fire: | None |
| Ground Injuries: | | Aircraft Explosion: | None |
| Total Injuries: | 1 Fatal | Latitude, Longitude: | 29.91185,-84.19295 |

Administrative Information

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| Investigator In Charge (IIC): | Gunther, Todd |
| Additional Participating Persons: | Daniel Crawford; FAA/FSDO; Tampa, FL David Harsanyi; Lycoming Engines; Williamsport, PA |
| Investigation Class: | Class 3 |
| Note: | The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident. |