

6 January 2015

## Desert Skies Parachute Rigging

Newsletter #1 - Buying your first rig - or - be prepared for your head to explode.

So, you just got your A license and now are ready to get your first rig. Following are some general helpful guidelines. Buying your first rig can be very frustrating, take your time, ask lots of questions, be flexible.

1. If you're one of those for whom money is no object, then don't read any further - just call the manufacturer of your choice and tell them what you want.
2. Determine a budget. New gear will run you about 7-8k with all the options. A decent used rig will go for between \$2500-\$6k depending on age, use, options etc.
3. I recommend going with a decent used rig until you have a better idea of what you are getting into. Right now you need something other than student and rental gear as you learn the basics. A license training gave you basic survival knowledge, now you are going to actually learn to skydive and developed your canopy skills. Buying new and fancy right off usually means you will outgrow the rig soon and beat it up in the process.
4. All rigs are four components - main, reserve, harness container, AAD.
5. Main - I recommend Performance Designs, however Icarus, Precision, Aerodyne all make excellent products. Most companies have significantly improved their customer service over the last few years. Most also have a demo program, take advantage of that. Stay conservative for a few hundred jumps. Most injuries and fatalities are canopy related, not freefall. You right now have no clue what you are doing, you have been taught the basics, but it can take years and thousands of jumps to truly become proficient and competent as a canopy pilot. Keep your wing loading low and conservative. Refer to USPA recommendations in the SIM. These were written by people experienced in this kind of thing. Don't worry too much about 7 vs 9 cell. Get a reliable general purpose canopy with relatively forgiving opening and landing characteristics. A couple recommendations are:

PD - Spectre, Silhouette, Pulse, Sabre II - all of these can be flown conservatively and aggressively and have a fairly wide performance envelope.

Aerodyne - Pilot

Focus on conservative performance and wing loading.

6. Reserve - You get what you pay for, do not go cheap here. I recommend PD again but all the major manufacturers make good, safe reliable reserves. Avoid the Precision Micro Raven Dash M or MZ. Precisions newer Rmax is well built and does not have the issues the MR-M and MR-MZ had. Their earlier model, the original Raven line of reserves were built like tanks and very reliable, however they do pack up bulky so are more often found in older gear.

Aerodyne makes the Smart reserve. I have had people complain about landing issues under smarts that are heavily loaded but this can happen under any heavily loaded reserve.

The Pisa Tempo is no longer in production and PISA is no longer in business but the reserves are solid and reliable. Also, riggers love them because they are easy to pack.

In my experience, the best overall reserve that I have had experience flying, inspecting, packing and working on is the Performance Designs reserve.

I recommend your first reserve NOT be any smaller than one square foot than one pound of your EXIT weight. In other words, do not exceed a wing loading of 1 pound exit weight per square foot of reserve surface area.

Since you are now an A license holder, you should be able to determine wing loading.

#### 7. Harness / Container - two parts

- a. harness - just fit your body type and size, kind of complicated. The hip lateral/main lift web/leg strap junction should be on your hip bone, chest strap not above the nipple area. Loose enough for free movement and arching, secure enough for safety. I strongly recommend articulated harnessed rigs.
- b. container, integrated with the harness, not separable. The containers must fit your canopies and these capacities are finite. DO NOT go outside the manufacturers recommendations of canopy capacities. With that said, many manufacturers have very, well, ,,,, "subjective" container capacities.

8. AADs - I recommend the airtec cypres. It is pricier than others but has the best reliability record and excellent customer service.

These recommendations are only that, and not an end all or be all guide. Do your research just like when buying a car or house. Also, buyer beware. Get peoples opinions, but, ask if they are sponsored by the manufacturer they are recommending. I recommend you get the input for experienced but non sponsored people. Their input will be from experience, not prejudiced by a fiduciary relationship.

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