

## Runway 14, wind 220°/25G35....

Depending on how you look at it, learning to fly at an airfield with four runways, or more correctly, four pairs of parallel runways, was a good or a bad thing. RAAF Base Point Cook back in the 80's had two sealed runways (17/35 and 04/22), and it also had two grass runways (08/26 and 13/31 if I remember rightly). The way you stayed on centreline on those runways was to aim at the big red and white checkered sightboards at the end. These sightboards presented a couple of disadvantages to budding military aviators, one being that they served as a target for the dreaded "sightboard run", a common event whereby your instructor didn't want to fail you for a flight but wanted to punish you for some misdemeanour. Keep your helmet and parachute on, and off you go to the sightboard. Extra unwanted fitness training.

The other disadvantage of this runway setup was that Tower switched runways whenever there was any noticeable crosswind, so in our basic training we never really learnt to deal with crosswind landings.

Northam of course presents no such limitation on your training. If you want to deal with a windsock on Viagra at 90 degrees to the runway, swirling, constantly changing, gusty conditions, wind shear and sink on finals, we have an airfield free of landing charges just for you.

If you're dealing with a typical Northam crosswind, remember it affects all legs of the circuit. If there's a good westerly component and you're not on the ball, you'll be out to your downwind spacing before you know it. On downwind you need to allow for it so your spacing doesn't go astray.

With a tailwind on base, you need to get the aeroplane set up early because you're going to get the base leg done pretty quickly. This may mean slowing down on late downwind and reducing power before you turn, and you'll also need less power across base so you can lose 500 feet quickly. Also, you want to start your finals turn a bit earlier than normal, so you don't overshoot and have a big S-turn onto final, which for a good pilot means a go-round. And conversely, with a headwind on base, you may decide to complete the turn before reducing power and doing the "lose speed not height" thing, and you may have a bit more power to get to finals. Also, if the conditions are gusty, be Irish and "be sure to be sure" that your speed is comfortably in the white arc before using flaps.

On finals, you get a good look at the wind direction because you're pointing the nose into it. (Okay, sideslipping all the way down finals is an option, but it's not very comfortable for passengers, so let's stick with what most people do.) If it's from the left, you'll need right rudder in the flare to point the nose down the runway and avoid bending the struts. In some light aircraft this is quite easy to manage, but an aeroplane like a 172 is very directionally stable. That's good because it means it's easy to hold a heading, which is a good thing for a training and touring aeroplane, but it also means it's very resistant to yaw. In a strong crosswind it takes a real bootful of rudder to straighten it. I don't know how many times I've said "more rudder" when a student has been applying a good bootful and thinking "That must be enough", but the nose still isn't quite straight.

There are a couple of ways to tell if you don't have enough quite enough rudder. The more obvious one is that the nose isn't pointing straight down the centreline, and another sign is that

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as you touch down the aeroplane's inertia will straighten it out and you'll feel a little bit of a yaw.

With any significant crosswind, as soon as you straighten up, the wind will try and push you off the centreline, so you need aileron into wind. And of course, from your very first flying lesson you know the secondary effect of aileron is yaw in the same direction, meaning opposite to the way you're trying to yaw, so any significant aileron input means even more rudder to counter it.

So remember – rudder to straighten the nose, aileron to stop the drift, and don't be scared to use the pedals – they're not footrests!

Happy flying, and if you can find one of those nice clear still winter days, get out and enjoy some flying. But if the wind looks like it's beyond you, admit your limitations – no shame in that – and go and see a movie instead. There's a cracker of a flying one out at the moment!

Kevin

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