PW-5/Standard Cirrus Comparison

by Harry Irvine

Well the first comparison, is that my new to me Standard Cirrus is thirty years old, and has about 1480 hours of flight time, while the PW-5 only has a couple of hundred hours on it, so it is a little more worn out.

1. Rigging-There is one wing pin for the Standard Cirrus. The Standard Cirrus wings are significantly harder to handle than the PW-5 wings due to their heavier weight. Both ships have about the same number of control hookups, but the Standard Cirrus' controls have to be hooked up by feel, as you cannot see what you are doing. The horizontal stabilizer goes on and off easily. I would give the nod on ease of assembly to the PW-5.
2. Ground handling-The Standard Cirrus' 528 lb empty weight makes it a little harder to push around, and it does not have a wing wheel so a helper is necessary to hold the wing when pushing the sailplane around. I would have to say the PW-5 has better ground handling.
3. Cockpit Comfort- The PW-5 cockpit is a little roomier, than the Standard Cirrus, but not to any great degree.
4. Take Off-The standard Cirrus seems less pitch sensitive than the PW-5, their seems to be a tendency for the left wing to want to drop, when there is no wind. The tow hook for the Standard Cirrus is a C-G hook, so it it is hard to see the tow rope. I would say it is a toss up as to which sailplane is easier to take off.
5. On Tow-While on tow the view of the tow plane is adequate in the Standard Cirrus. In the PW-5 in order to keep the correct station behind the tow plane it caused vision problems for me as I had to look through the reading lenses of my bi-focal glasses, giving a blurry image of the tow plane. Also the location of the PW-5 compass blocks out quite a bit of the tow plane. On both sailplanes most of the stick forces can be trimmed out. I would say on tow the Standard Cirrus is a little easier to fly, but only because of the vision problems.
6. The Stalling characteristics did not stall the PW-5. The Standard Cirrus has a very powerful horizontal stabilizer, and it is an all flying one, and it can be stalled very easily. There is a warning burble, with a definite break. I have not made a turning stall yet. As I have not stalled the PW-5 yet, I cannot compare the two.
7. Thermalling-I have been able to get the Standard Cirrus down to about 48 knots while thermalling, and it feels pretty solid. I think with some more seat time in the PW-5 I could get it to thermal, at a slower speed than 48 knots. The PW-5 feels more buoyant, than the Standard Cirrus, and does not pick up speed so fast when the nose drops, so I would give the nod to the PW-5. However I would have to work several thermals against a PW-5 to see which ship can climb the best.

8. Interthermal-My seat of the pants feel is that in inter thermal runs the Standard Cirrus is significantly better than the PW-5.
9. Spoilers-I would say that the PW-5 has more effective spoilers than the Standard Cirrus.
10. Roll Rate-Both ships feel about the same to me.
11. Control forces-Both ships are very light on the controls. The stick feel is extremely absent on the Cirrus, but there is a very strong trim spring to give an artificial feel.
12. Landing-The pattern speeds are about the same, I could not say which ship lands better. I suspect that one could get the PW-5 into shorter strip than the Standard Cirrus.

Overall-I would say that for local flying it would be a toss up as to which sailpane is better. For cross country, on a decent day, the Standard Cirrus would be the better ship. So far I have 8 hours on the Standard Cirrus but only about 50 minutes in the PW-5, so it is difficult for me to say which is the overall best ship. I have some time in a Grob 102, and my feeling is that it is easier to soar the Cirrus than the Grob.