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(http://blog.performance-designs.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Joe\_freefall\_practicereinder.jpg) Joe Grabianowski in Freefall

Operation Enduring Warrior - Skydive (<http://enduringwarrior.kintera.org/faf/donorReg/donorPledge.asp?event=1070841&supid=396383054>) is a non-profit organization that works to empower wounded veterans by helping them to achieve Extreme Goals. Operation Enduring Warrior (<http://www.enduringwarrior.org/>) has seen a number of inspiring veterans welcomed into our sport and skydiving family. Most of us have seen the inspiring images of Todd Love (<https://www.facebook.com/thetoddlove>) and other wounded warriors that have gone through AFF training and continued to become licensed skydivers. Axis Flight School (<http://www.AXISFlightSchool.com>) has been a big part of this training, and has helped these wounded warriors to fulfill their personal goals of becoming licensed skydivers. We sat down with lead FS coach for Axis, Brianne Thompson ([http://www.axisflightschool.com/\\_about\\_us\\_coaches.html](http://www.axisflightschool.com/_about_us_coaches.html)), to better understand the challenge of choosing the appropriate canopy for these new skydivers.

"As with all things, there is a learning process. We take our best educated guess, try it, then assess the next best course of action. In some cases, you wing it. In the case of the Spectre (<http://www.performance-designs.com/spectre.asp>) 170, when it was first sent to us for Todd Love, I was a little bit concerned that it would be too small. I was expecting a Navigator (<http://www.performance-designs.com/navigator.asp>) 200. I tend to be on the conservative side of things, and putting a student, regardless of their size or body shape, on something below a 200 seemed a bit out there. Granted, it was a complete emotional response; I had no scientific evidence of that being bad, just that "we'd never done that before". Dangerous words, to be sure. So, when the Spectre 170 came I was a bit skeptical, but Nik felt confident that it would be awesome. He did a test jump and we agreed that shorter brake line length would be critical in order to preserve the arms and hands of Todd. We needed the canopy to flare at or above his belly button, rather than past his hips. Once the brake lines were shortened, we were ready to go. Todd did his first couple landings with the confidence of someone who had done that before, and as someone constantly trying to learn their canopy. It was actually pretty exciting to watch.

The landings were soft and



(http://blog.performance-designs.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/OEWspread.jpg) Spread in Parachutist

forgiving, but the power of the Spectre had yet to reveal itself. After several jumps, Nik figured it would be time to follow Todd under canopy in order to get some pics. Nik jumped the Pulse (<http://www.performance-designs.com/pulse.asp>) 190, thinking that that had more glide and size than the Storm (<http://www.performance-designs.com/storm.asp>) and he would be all set. What was amazing was that because of Todd's lack of legs, it affected how he hung in the harness and it directly affected the glide of the canopy.

(http://blog.performance-designs.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/DSC\_3597.jpg) Todd Love on Spectre 170

Todd sat in the harness much like a paraglider pilot: he reclined in the harness. With the combination of the recline, and the lack of drag on his legs, the Spectre had more glide than the Pulse! A surprising amount more.

The Spectre's powerful, yet forgivable flare was the other big keeper. The Spectre allowed the students to correct mid-flare,

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rather than having to commit to the process and hope for the best. We all want soft landings for our students, but we must confess, it seemed even more critical for these students because Todd and Joe had no landing gear. Their landing gear is their seat/tailbone and spine. The Spectre offers a flare that allows the student to adjust and correct, mid-flare, with good response from the canopy, yet without an adverse affect. As the students grow and evolve, it

will be important for them to try other canopies. Their canopy skills will evolve just like their freefall skills, and it will be important for us to foster those changes. But, during the learning process, the Spectre seems to be the most forgiving canopy for the wing loading and body style that these students have."

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