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Denver's Only Sport Pilot Flight School Is Getting Busy

By: Reggie Paulk



You can find quite a few flight schools near Denver, Colorado. But you'll only find one [SportStar Flight Center](#). Skyraider Aviation, at the Erie Municipal Airport, is using the new Evektor SportStar to provide their club members with a learning tool par excellence. It's proving quite popular too; after only four months in business, they've already got another airplane on order.

As a pilot who is rated in everything from gliders to seaplanes, I've flown more than 40 types of aircraft and seen my share of flight schools. With that experience, it takes a lot to impress me. After spending a day flying and photographing the SportStar at Skyraider Aviation, I can say I was impressed.

What sets Skyraider Aviation apart from traditional flight schools is its founder; Christopher Dillis. Chris isn't like most flight school owners. He's not a seasoned professional pilot with thousands of hours in his logbook. With a little over 150 hours, Chris is a Private Pilot who saw an opportunity in the new Sport Pilot regulations. As a new pilot, he was all too familiar with the difficulty of completing the requirements of a traditional flight-training program. He built his business plan on the premise that others would see value in the greatly simplified requirements of the Sport Pilot program. It seems his premise was correct.

Sport Pilots can fly with a valid driver's license as their only proof of medical eligibility. In addition, they may fly with one passenger, and they can do this with fewer than half the flight time required of Private Pilots. But they are limited to flying two-seat aircraft that weigh less than 1320 pounds fully loaded. In order to see how much of a limitation this would be, I asked Chris for a demonstration of his Evektor SportStar.

At first glance, the SportStar seems quite small; almost tiny. I'm over six feet tall, and Chris tops 6'4", so I was skeptical that this airplane was going to prove impressive. After climbing into the wide cockpit and closing the wonderful bubble canopy, I was blown away. That little airplane literally swallowed our bulk, and left me feeling quite comfortable. A four-seat Cessna 172 isn't that nice. Comfort wasn't going to be an issue, but we hadn't left the ground yet.

After an early morning air-to-air photo session, where the SportStar easily kept up with our bigger and more powerful Cessna 172 photo ship, I had the opportunity to fly the airplane with Chris's chief pilot, Dennis. I've been disappointed with the performance of two-seat Cessna 152's in Colorado's rarified air, and wasn't sure this airplane would be up to the task.

Climbing quickly into a clear blue sky, my doubts were extinguished. That glorious bubble canopy gave us a panoramic view of the beautiful Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. The SportStar loves to fly. It has excellent climb with two men and full fuel; good range; is very quiet and has a view that has to be experienced to be appreciated.

After flying the SportStar, I actually felt a little tinge of jealousy that somebody with only 20 hours of flight training could go up with a friend and experience this little sport plane. Back in my day, you couldn't even *buy* a plane this cool!

For more information please contact Skyraider Aviation.

<http://www.skyraideraviation.com/>

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