

IGC Steward report WGC 2022, Montlucons, France

36th FAI World Gliding Championships,
Club, Standard, 15 meter

Montlucon, France

Contest Director: Thierry Paris

Chief Steward: Frouwke Kuijpers

Steward: Robin van Maarschalkerweerd

Jury President: Peter Eriksen



Competition overview.

It was great to be able to organize another world championship, despite Corona. A big thank you to everyone who contributed to this

In general it was a good and nice competition, with a good atmosphere. The host was very friendly and helpful to all the people. The airfield of Montlucon was sufficiently equipped to host the competition although the facilities were very basic. During the training week and the competition the airfield was closed for other air traffic. Operational processes went very well. Flying aspects were challenging due to the location of Montlucon, situated in a wet area and 400m AMSL. Convection started late with weak thermals and the local height of the cloudbase was the limiting factor regarding the time of the first launch. Despite this, the organization was able to make 8/9 out of 12 competition days, although the tasks were very small plus many outlandings (about 50% of all flights). The maximum total result was 4614 points, clubclass.

No complaints/protests were submitted.

Two serious accidents happened, one on the 1st practice day (mid air) and one during the 1st competition day (launch failure), luckily with no injuries. A compliment to all the pilots, despite the difficult weather and the many outlandings, all the other flights ended safely.

Because of COVID only pilots, TC's and organization were allowed to be present at briefing, also no camping facilities were allowed on the airfield.

Preparations

Thanks to COVID we became familiar with digital meetings, we have had several during the preparations. One special meeting about the new rules about cheating and sportive behavior. The competition was well supported by all authorities and stakeholders.

Practice period

Only two flying days were possible during the training period. A disadvantage of this was that not all procedures were standardized and clear before the first competition day. Especially the difficult Airspace situation was food for some discussion.

Scrutineering

In the beginning the scrutineering team had to learn how to do this. After a good briefing it went well.

Note: it is important to have an English speaking team member in the team.

Furthermore it would help if in Annex A, as an appendix, there is a standard scrutineering form and guidelines on how to measure things.

Organization

Although the organization team of the contest was a small team, all the members were well prepared for their role, extremely helpful and friendly. The staff made use of all the available competencies and after the first days it was a smooth operating machine. Both Stewards, as part of the team, were closely involved in the decision-making process.

The group of volunteers, responsible for the daily routines as gridding and grid running did a good job, this included also the towingpilots, who did more than only towing such as the daily weighing.

Compliments for the small but very dedicated team!

Facilities

Briefing room was well equipped with a good sound system. Office and registration was in the tower. Bar and restaurant facilities were situated around the clubhouse, outside using three big party tents.

Everyday fresh meals were made by a small group of volunteers.

THE place where the team cabins were situated was fine, this was more important than usual because there was no camping due to COVID.

Communication

In general 50% of the pilots don't speak English very well, in this case half of the French volunteers as well. Therefore writing down all the decisions was very helpful for understanding what is going on. A web page, several WhatsApp groups and Soaring Spot were used by the organization in order to communicate efficiently. Official messages were announced by an official, one direction WA group to all people involved. Radio announcements were confirmed by WA.

All official documents were published on Soaring Spot.

Recommendation is to rewrite Annex A to implement the possibility of digital communication systems, giving structure of using digital systems.

TC meeting

Before the official TC meeting there was one TC meeting regarding the IGC trackers and after the briefing they were distributed among the teams.

The first official TC meeting was delayed 1 day because of a midair that happened that afternoon which took some time. During the competition, two more TC meetings took place, one after the first flying day, and another because of the Airspace discussions. After this no other TC meeting was needed anymore.

PEV

Because no experience could be gained with the new PEV starting system during the training period, it was decided not to use it during this competition. A WGC is not a place to try new things without a test period, was the general opinion. During the competition there was a change of mind, nearly all pilots would have liked using the PEV start method due to the tactical flying. One day the standard class waited too long which ended in a non competition day because the remaining weather window turned out to be too short. With the PEV start this wouldn't have happened. (Beside the improved fairness sport wise, it will improve safety as well since it may prevent mass starts or huge gaggles under blue conditions.)

Briefing

Briefing was well organized. Every morning at 10.30 sharp briefing started. The day winners were put in the spotlight every day, receiving daily prizes.

The daily ppp was published at Soaring Spot, this makes the briefing very efficient, especially for the non native English speakers this was very helpful to understand the things that were mentioned.

Everyday there was a special Safety item of the day before presented by the Steward, who was the president of the Pilot's Safety Committee. Meteo briefing was given by a team member of the French National Women team who also

was the sniffer. A very good combination of both functions.

The weather, meteo

Forecasting the weather was very difficult, weather models seem not yet been adapted to the effects of the climate change. Every day it resulted in a try and error schedule before launching could start. Once away from the plateau conditions improved. Most of the time launching could start only after 14.00 - 15.00 LT, often it was a challenge to have all classes launched in time to fly a proper task. Unfortunately for the pilots, thermals were not very strong and the way back home often had to be done at the end of the convection time. 98 km/hr was the maximum speed achieved in this competition.

Tasksetting

Because of the unpredictable time of 1st launch the A-task was most of the time too big, often the B task was flown. At the end a C task was kept behind as an emergency task.

It was a pity that the second day in the Standard class became no valid competition day because of the waiting game before start. Not enough pilots reached the minimum scoring distance.

Operational Procedures

Montlucon, elevation 420 M AMSL.

It has a 50 by 2000 m long paved runway, and an unpaved runway of 80 by 1000 m.

Daily Weighing

The daily weighing went well. It is and remains a collaboration between the pilots and the organization team, there must be some cooperation. Many pilots like to be weighed 15 minutes before the briefing, and that is simply not possible.

Gridding

The different classes were set up in rows of 3, after gridding the gliders were pushed back as much as possible.

Sniffer

Without the daily sniffer, it would have been very difficult to determine the start time. Due to the heavy rain that had fallen in the previous period, the predictions were difficult to interpret. It was also possible to indicate good thermals just before launch, so that the chance of landings was reduced. The limiting factor was the cloudbase, sometimes it took up to two hours before it was high enough to send everyone in the air safely, and then fly off the plateau.

Towing

There were 12 tow planes, the whole grid was usually towed within one hour. Because of the two runways, towplanes could land opposite to the launch direction on the grass which saved a lot of time. Sometimes it was necessary to wait a while until the previous class had reached sufficient height and the next class could be launched safely. Many tow pilots were old army pilots, they formed a well functioning team. There was good mutual communication between the ground and the tow pilots. The towing team was very flexible in their operational execution, for example it was possible to change the launch areas during launch without any problems.

The grid runners formed a well functioning team too. Every glider did have his own tow rope, this significantly shortened the launch period.

Finishing

The finish ring was set out in such a way that all gliders had to enter through a circuit via a reporting point. This gave a very calm flight pattern and certainly an improvement in safety during finishing. Of course it helped that the airfield had a lot of space to land.

The gliders that made a direct landing had to land on the other side of the runway in the opposite landing direction. Due to good air traffic control everything went very disciplined, the pilots had a lot of confidence in the local ATC and listened carefully.

During the logfile control it was checked that there were no pull ups before entering the finishing.

Scoring

The scoring team consisted of two people, with a lot of experience. Errors were quickly found and resolved. There was one mistake in the script for the team cup, a country can only participate for the team cup if there is more than 1 pilot from a country. This was not processed in the script, in the end the team cup calculation was calculated manually.

Safety

As mentioned before, every briefing a moment was spent on Safety by the Safety officer. Three times a more extensive presentation was held on the subjects of flying in gaggles, one item was how to use your parachute and sometimes pictures of the Proximity Analysis Tool (PAT) were presented. And every day reflections of the day before. These Safety Briefings were well received by the pilots due to the topicality of the items presented.

A Safety committee was installed, three pilots of each class, plus the Steward. There were not many reports about dangerous flying, the advice to talk to the pilot first was well followed.. After the presentation about flying in gaggles, a significant difference was noticeable in flight behavior.

PAT was used to monitor trends, it is still a tool in development. A warning in the beginning of the competition to a pilot known as one flying on the edge, which could be shown by PAT in combination with SeeYou, helped a lot to change flying behavior of the pilots. Pilots were aware that they were being monitored. The fact that the organization had this possibility, already had a positive effect.

One day was canceled because of upcoming thunderstorms which developed much faster than expected, also the class that had already started was canceled. All gliders landed safely.

There was some concern regarding the experience of some pilots. Although the pilots met the minimum requirements according Annex A to participate, some pilots didn't have the basic skills to fly in such a crowded competition. NAC's should pay attention to this phenomenon and be critical on who to send to these big events.

Accidents

Two severe accidents happened.

Mid Air

During the first day of the training week, a mid-air occurred while flying in a gaggle. Fortunately, both pilots were able to land safely. One pilot was not able to repair the glider in time and had to withdraw, the other pilot was able to continue the competition.

Towing Accident

A towing incident took place on the first day of the competition. At the most unfortunate moment of the towing, there was an engine failure on about 60% of the length of the runway. The fully loaded standard class glider had to make a 180 degree turn with hardly enough energy. During this turn, the right wing's winglet touched the top of a 2,50 meter fence, then the glider just flew over two parked gliders. Luckily the pilot could land safely. The damaged winglet could be replaced after which the pilot could continue the competition.

IGC Tracking system

The IGC tracking system could be used for the first time. This system was developed to prevent live tracking via the FLARM devices., Flarm could be used as it is intended for, as a safety device .

It is a pity that the training week only had two flyable days, so there was not enough opportunity to test the IGC trackers sufficiently. In the end it worked, but it should be easier to use: for example, the antenna was too big, making it difficult to place the tracker. Sometimes the antenna broke because of this.

There must be a dedicated person within the organization who is responsible for the trackers, such as charging every evening and repairing damage. Giving the trackers and chargers to the TC didn't work well.

During scrutineering, a suitable place for the tracker should be found in the cockpit. This should be checked during the daily weighing.

Opening and closing ceremony

The opening ceremony was well organized in downtown Montluçon. After the official opening, the organizers, TCs and VIPs present were invited to a reception with plenty of food and drinks in the historic town hall. Pilots were invited to go to the town's castle square for a drink with a beautiful view. In the end the leftovers were served to the pilots.

The closing ceremony and prize giving were well organized

Media

A lot of energy has been put into making the WGC visible to the (French) public.

Every day, live tracking with commentary was broadcast on a French TV channel. A simulator was available for the public to fly with. Afterwards, pilots were interviewed live, it was broadcasted on FB and other social media. French stakeholders were also often invited and explanations were given about the sport of gliding. In the adjacent hangar was an exhibition of beautiful historic aircraft.

Social events

During the COVID period the social events (National and French Evening, Final Party) were very successful, everybody was happy that despite COVID this was possible again