

Stewards' Report from the 4th FAI Women's World Gliding Championships, Romorantin, France, 6th–22nd July 2007

1 Organization

1.1 Overall organization

The Aéroclub de Sologne came in at a late stage as Organizer of this event, after the original bidder had withdrawn. Accordingly, the Organizers had not had the opportunity to gain experience by means of a test event ("Pre-Worlds") in the previous year. Further, no previous FAI championships had been held at the site. It was therefore not surprising that there were a few hitches in the organization during the first few days of the event. However, most problems were able to be solved with the aid of the Stewards and Team Captains.

Some assistance was provided from the personnel of the military air base with which the club shares the airfield. The military section also have a gliding operation, and they have experience with the organization of international military gliding contests.

1.2 Quantity of officials

Despite the fact that the Aéroclub de Sologne is not a large club, all the important posts were occupied, and there was an enthusiastic and hard-working group of young people who manned the information office and the grid. However, a certain lack of manpower at the intermediate level became apparent when it was observed that some of the officials were fulfilling multiple tasks. This had some negative consequences: for example, on the first competition day the opening times of the start lines were not announced correctly, because the Competition Director was busy marshalling the tugs and his deputy was towing. The Stewards managed to convince the Director that the important officials should be freed from such duties as towing or marshalling. However, it was apparently not possible to find a tow pilot to replace the Safety Manager!

The Scorer worked most of the time completely alone in a room full of computers.

1.3 Experience of officials

The Competition Director and the Scorer came from other clubs and both had been part of the organization of the previous year's European Championships in Vinon. However, some of the unexpected problems encountered during the event (see below) can only be attributed to lack of experience on the part of some members of the organization. A particular deficiency was the apparent absence of any person who fully understood the software (SeeYou) used for task setting and scoring.

The Competition Director was the only one of the main officials with a good command of English. At the briefings and Team Captains' meetings he had to act as interpreter for the Deputy Director, the Safety Officer and the meteorologists. Fortunately, the young people in the competition office seemed to be proficient in English.

1.4 Suitability of meetings and briefings

The hangar used for briefings and Team Captains' meetings was adequate. The Stewards and the Jury had an office for their work and meetings.

1.5 Suitability of weather information

Meteorologists from the air base provided adequate weather information.

1.6 Suitability of facilities

The toilets and showers seemed to be adequate for the number of contestants and teams staying at the camp site. Excellent meals were provided at a reasonable price.

1.7 Transportation

All Stewards and Jury members came with their own cars.

1.8 Information dissemination

The usual means of communication — notice board, WLAN, mobile telephones, “pigeon holes” — were in principle available, in addition to the pilots' and Team Captains' briefings, but were not all used or did not function reliably, resulting in some problems, especially in the first few days of the contest:

- The “Official Notice Board” was at first placed in the briefing hangar, which unfortunately had to be locked at night because it also housed a workshop. On one occasion, this led to the unofficial results being inaccessible for most of the protest time. The notice board was therefore moved to the club house, but the “unofficial notice board” at the entrance to the bar seemed to be preferred for the publication of results.
- The first task sheets contained numerous errors because the task setters were obviously not working from a template but writing the new task sheets from scratch each day. It also took several days to get everything in English with the correct descriptions of the task types.
- The information given concerning airspace, and especially the differences between the airspace file supplied by the Organizers and the maps, was confusing. The standard procedure is of course to print the airspace on the task sheet and to explain it on a projection at briefing. This was eventually done, but it took a few days before the task sheets were produced to everyone's satisfaction. Fortunately, there were no airspace infringements.
- The presentation of the scoring results turned out to be a real problem. For the first few days, the task types (AAST and racing task) were incorrectly named (first in French, then in English, but still wrong at first). This problem was eventually solved, but up to the end it proved impossible for the computer to produce clear headings for the day and overall scores. There were no monitors for displaying the provisional results. The presentation of the result on the internet site of the contest was much better, but some mistakes in the results of the first few days (e.g. "racing task" instead of "AAST") were not corrected later.

- The WLAN broke down regularly, and no-one seemed to be able to solve the technical problems. The most reliable access point was at the bar, so those team members who were writing reports for their aero clubs or for local newspapers collected there during the day. The Jury and Stewards were given a cable connection, which worked well at least in the second week.

The problems with the task sheets and results (and the scoring itself, see below) were due to the fact that neither the scorer nor the task-setters had full control over the software. Further, not all steps were tested during the official training period.

1.9 Pilot assistance

Pilots were given every assistance required, including repair of damaged gliders. The staff of the competition office were friendly and helpful.

1.10 Retrieval

The standard system of outlanding reports to the Team Captains and by the Team captain to the competition office seemed to work well. The Stewards did not hear of any problems.

1.11 Launch control

Launching procedures were efficient and safe throughout the contest.

1.12 Opening and closing ceremonies

For the opening ceremony, the teams assembled at the town hall of Romorantin and marched 1.7 km through the town to the “Pyramid”, a modern centre for social activities, where the actual ceremony took place. The closing ceremony was at the airfield. Both were attended by the local dignitaries and representatives of the FFVV and took place in a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere, without undue pomp, but in all respects worthy of a world championship. There was a slight hitch at the closing ceremony when the CD with the German national anthem failed to play, but the team reacted admirably with an impromptu *a capella* performance!

1.13 Other social events

Apart from the obligatory farewell party, there was an international evening, with typical food and drinks from the various participating nations, the famous Baba Yaga evening with the initiation of the new “witches” and an amusing ceremony at which selected Team Captains were admitted to the “Brotherhood of Wine Producers of the Sologne”. There was good attendance at all events, and they certainly contributed to the friendly atmosphere of the championships.

1.14 Total number of scheduled days and number of contest days

9 out of a possible 11 contest days were flown.

1.15 Media liaison

There was some coverage in French television and in the local newspapers. The march through the town to the opening ceremony certainly attracted attention, and the event was advertised with posters in the town. Nevertheless, there were few spectators, even at the weekends.

The internet site provided the scores, photos and a brief daily newsletter, but no information about the pilots. The IGC files were not available on the web site during the competition, but were added later.

1.16 Tracking

11 Vpos units were used, and the tracking information was displayed on a screen in the hangar, using the Silent Wings software, and also made available on the internet. Unfortunately, most of the units failed to transmit data most of the time. This is not the first time that Vpos has failed in a competition, whatever the causes may be. In principle, the data display with Silent Wings provides an exciting way of following the competition, but the efforts and costs involved in setting up the tracking system are simply wasted if the units do not work reliably.

1.17 Other organizational comments

Despite the numerous points of minor criticism mentioned in this report, it must be emphasized that the contest was nevertheless a sporting success with three worthy World Champions. The Organizers were at all times open to suggestions from the Stewards.

2 Rules

2.1 Adequacy of Local Procedures

Apart from the temporary problems with the airspace mentioned above the Local Procedures were adequate.

2.2 Addendums or changes

After discussions with the Team Captains some changes were made:

- The area in which thermalling only to the left was allowed was re-defined to be within 10 km radius of each start point or the airfield, instead of 20 km around the airfield.
- The contest boundary coordinates, which had not been provided to the teams on arrival as promised, were specified in writing.
- The landing procedure was changed so that the landing direction was the same for both “direct” and “speed” finishers. For this purpose, use was made of the military part of the airfield

2.3 Fair application of Rules and Local Procedures

The Stewards are not aware of any cases where the rules were not applied fairly.

2.4 Possible improvements of Rules and/or Local Procedures

There was a discussion with one Team Captain about the interpretation of paragraph 5.4.f of Annex A (“The Organizers shall require the backup FR only in the event that the primary FR fails”). The Team Captain wanted the second flight recorder of a pilot to be considered, because it showed a later start. The reason was that the pilot had circled in a thermal shortly after crossing the line and drifted back so that the last circle just cut the start line. Both FRs were using an interval of 10 s between fixes, and by chance only the second FR had a fix behind the line which would have validated the second start. The Organizers argued that the primary FR had not failed, because it showed a valid start (the first one), whereas the Team Captain argued that it had “failed” to show the second start. The interpretation of the Competition Director (shared also by the Stewards) was eventually accepted, and the Team Captain did not follow up his complaint with a protest. The rules should be more specific about what is considered to be a “failure” of the primary FR.

2.5 Task setting and operations

In the opinion of the Stewards the task setter did a good job under difficult meteorological conditions. On one day almost all pilots landed out because the weather turned out to be worse than predicted, which the task setter could not have foreseen.

2.6 Scoring system (use and application)

The scoring for the club class was completely wrong on the first competition day. The program gave the day factor as 1.0, whereas it should have been 0.688, due to the fact that several competitors had not reached a scoring distance of at least 100 km. After investigation it was found that the scoring script used had the parameter Dm — the minimum distance for a valid competition day — set to 50 km instead of 100 km. It turned out that the scorer had been using a script intended for French national events instead of the correct script for international FAI contests. Replacement of the script with the correct one solved the problem.

2.7 Protest handling and registration

There was only one protest, which was handled promptly by the Jury.

3 Safety

3.1 General safety of the event

The standard of safety was extremely high.

3.2 Occurrence of incidents and/or accidents

There were no serious accidents. One trailer — belonging to the club — was badly damaged when it overturned during a retrieve, presumably due to lack of experience on the part of the driver. One case of alleged dangerous flying in a thermal was dealt with by the safety committee.

3.3 Availability of medical personnel

Medical personnel was available from the air base.

3.4 Use of safety officers

The Safety Officer was always present at briefing and commented as appropriate on safety issues.

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