

Report of the CIVA Contest Organisation Working Group (COWG) 2015

The aim of the CIVA Contest Organisation Working Group (COWG) is to monitor and assess the working practices and effectiveness of organisers of CIVA events, with a view to developing existing successful processes and adopting new methods where these are seen to have beneficial value. The COWG, partly through the efforts of the appointed CIVA event liaison officer, works to avoid and prevent policies or practices that conflict with the commissions' view of "good practice".

It is pleasing to note that most of the items reported by this WG in 2014 have received sufficient attention to make repetition unlikely, viz:

- Adoption of the CIVA Guide to Contest Organisation (GCO) has certainly broadened the planning processes of organisers, though we have still seen this year a few obvious failures to take that advice at face value.
- Clearly the handling of Free Unknowns has improved, with competitors now required to sign to verify their choice of sequence letter, and the radio exchange with the Chief Judge has been extended to verify which letter sequence the competitor intends to fly.
- In OpenAero the Free Unknown sequence design system has been developed to allow storage and re-use of the selected master figures in a protected mode that prevents changes to them until they are 'released' by the designer.
- In the ACRO scoring software the entry of Free Unknown sequence data has been revised to employ a 'master' set of figure identities and K-factors that are subsequently copied to create each individual sequence design, ensuring that each one conforms exactly to the source data.

Points arising from the 2015 championships

Radio communication systems

Boundary judging was a feature of all championships this year, though at both the Deva EAAC and the Chateauroux WAC the standard of the radio communications systems provided by the organisers was inadequate.

The EAAC organisers made available a number of good quality Motorola PMR's (personal mobile radios) for this duty, and although the units themselves were in principle adequate for the task

the local topography / buildings / trees prevented their operation being to an acceptable standard. To provide good communications in these situations a 'repeater' mounted at some high point is required to ensure that all four boundary judges are always able to communicate clearly and directly with the boundary judge manager located at the Chief Judge's table.

In France the WAC organisers provided all necessary ground staff with "Talkie-Walkie"s whose performance unfortunately fell well short of the expected capability. A stop-gap solution using aircraft vhf band hand-held transceivers for the boundary judging team was quickly thwarted by Chateauroux ATC who could not provide or would not agree to the necessary 'spare' frequencies. Fortunately jury member Vladimir Machula had brought with his wind-measuring drone team a quantity of Motorola PMR's which he agreed to loan to the organisers for the duration of the event, and although these were almost good enough for the boundary judging task they too suffered from the usual intermittent 'barely line of sight' transmit / receive problems that we had already suffered at EAAC. Once again the only solution would appear to be installation and testing *before* the event of a multi-channel 'repeater' at some elevated point, to ensure that good communications are always possible between all of the people who need to use these systems.

Wind measurement systems

The UAV / drone system operated at the Zbraslavice WGAC and the Chateauroux WAC by Vladimir Machula and his assistant was able to provide wind speed and direction data quickly and efficiently for the designated airborne levels, the data for ground level being resourced as usual via local meteorological information resources. It was very quickly apparent at WAC however that the local police and security staff did not accept the legality of this operation within the airport boundaries, despite supporting paperwork having been forwarded to the championship organisers before the event.

It subsequently took several visits from various police officers and DGAC officials to move this system and the two operators onto an approved working basis, this experience emphasizing the degree of pre-planning and caution necessary when seeking to operate a UAV or drone system at a location populated by the public as well as in close proximity to commercial air traffic. Ultimately however this aerial wind data results service worked extremely well, responses to requests for wind speed and direction being generally satisfied within 5-10 minutes.

From the viewpoint of service cost, organisers using this or similarly instrumented UAV's that can demonstrate appropriate levels of robust flight capability and data feedback accuracy, and have the legal clearance to work within the aerobatic competition arena, should find that a single operator plus the equipment and operating costs are significantly cheaper, quicker and more easily deployed than traditional helium balloon based systems. In fact it is increasingly doubtful that helium balloon and theodolite tracking systems together with the skill required to operate them can be commercially resourced now, and UAV based solutions such as this almost certainly represent the best way forward for CIVA championships.

Video operation

The provision of a workable standard of video recording and play-back for all flights is a mandatory feature of all CIVA championships, primarily to “tie-break” on every occasion where the Hard Zero is awarded for a figure by some but not all judges.

To provide an adequate level of quality for this duty it is essential that –

- a. The video operator has sufficient experience to perform the job to a good standard.
- b. The video equipment is adequate to provide the steadiness and clarity necessary to enable judges to determine an appropriate outcome in their deliberations.

At EAAC the organisers had made arrangements with a number of video operators for duty on different days, only some of whom were sufficiently skilled to execute this job to a satisfactory standard. This of course led to repeated on-the-job instruction and training of the operators, wasting the CJ’s time and resources.

From experience it is also highly advantageous for the operator to use a direct-to-memory system in conjunction with a laptop computer rather than recording onto old-fashioned mini-cassettes, as the former enables much faster access to locate each flight and smarter fast-forward / reverse facilities for review.

FAI and CIVA medals

Early in 2015 following discussions with the bureau, the president sought with the help of the Czech Republic delegate to procure facsimile FAI and CIVA gold, silver and bronze medals from an alternative source in the Czech Republic, principally with a view to reducing the cost burden on CIVA’s financial resources. For reference the total cost of the 48 medals assigned from FAI to the World Championship at Chateauroux amounted to SFr 1,167 or about EUR 1,070 or 785 GBP. Over the four championships each year this represents a total cost to CIVA in the region of 3-4 thousand Euros. If a more cost-effective solution could be found and approved by FAI it would provide a repeating benefit to CIVA finances over many years.

Though the bureau was not involved, it would appear that the initial Czech suppliers declined to continue with the project at a late stage and their successor took longer than expected to provide an initial batch. The EAAC organisers however were unable to discover whether they would receive the medals they required from this alternate source, and at a late stage during the event itself International Jury president Pik Kúchler was fortunately able to arrange for them to receive their medals as a hand delivery from FAI Sports and Marketing Director Markus Haggerty – but only two days before they were due to be awarded at the closing ceremony.

At the WGAC / WAGAC events that followed we understand that these alternative medals were used, though from photographs it appears that their appearance did not quite match the FAI versions and reputedly they were of lighter weight. Neither the bureau nor the COWG have subsequently been given the opportunity to handle and review these medals, nor were we able

to secure them for the French organisers for the Chateauroux WAC. This led inevitably to the need for a further late arrangement established by the WAC Jury president to secure yet another last-minute delivery of genuine FAI medals – this time with the arrival of the FAI Secretary General Susanne Schödel on the final day of the event.

At both EAAC and WAC therefore, CIVA was saved from embarrassing “no medals” situations by senior FAI officers personally coming to our aid, and we are indebted to them for their swift and helpful responses. The prospect of being unable to award medals at the closing ceremony of a major championship is a humiliating experience. Clearly it is important to CIVA that all fixed costs are held to a realistic minimum, but in this case the internal CIVA communications were extremely poor, the chosen solution was late and may not have met the required standard, and as a result four major championships were put at risk.

One final practical consideration – there presumably exists now a set of FAI and CIVA medal dies that should be able to produce the required physical result in both cases, and some further development could well provide the quality of medals we are seeking. In this case, if the cost advantage is sufficiently attractive then CIVA can approach FAI again with a view to making a formal decision regarding their adoption.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Nick Buckenham', is positioned above the typed name.

Nick Buckenham
COWG Chairman 2015