

Agenda Item 6.3 - Report of the CIVA Strategic Planning Group, 2014

The duty of the CIVA Strategic Planning Group (SPG) is to take an unrestricted 'blue sky' view of the commission's existing regulations and operating practices, to see whether alternative and potentially better solutions might be developed and implemented to benefit the staging of Continental and World championship aerobatic events.

It should be emphasised that this exploration of unusual or unconventional solutions to practices that may have become established over many years from our historic roots has one simple objective, that we take the time to carefully evaluate all potentially good and possibly quite unusual ideas that could become valuable to the development of our sport.

For both of the proposals here it is suggested that CIVA form a Working Group to assess and evaluate the potential of each subject. There is no immediate requirement to vote for a change in our existing regulations, that move would come at a later time if the WG's response is positive.

For 2014 the SPG makes the following proposals:

SPG Proposal #1: Form a Working Group to consider the development and possible adoption of a single new programme format to replace the existing Known and Free programmes, to be called for example the "Free Known Programme".

At present, as has been for a great many years:

- As the first sequence in each category pilots fly a "Known" programme that is selected by a small working group each year from sequences submitted by many nations. This approach has great merit in that the selected sequence will have been the subject of critical review before its adoption, and should thus provide a safe but suitably challenging test.
- An inevitable consequence of this, especially at the highly popular Advanced championships, is that we see a large number of flights of the same sequence. In time this repetition of identical sequences becomes tedious to judge and thus subject to reduced judging standards through inattention and fatigue. The "Q" / Known sequence is also difficult to present through existing media channels, the differences between good and not-so-good flights being in the detail and perceptible only to 'expert' judges and skilled commentators.
- Pilots fly as the second sequence a "Free" programme that is designed by each competitor or their Team Manager in accordance with a set of rules that have been carefully developed over many years. While this format demands from competitors good sequence design skills to complement their ability to execute the figures well, it also encourages pilots to exercise 'damage limitation' as it is commonly believed that the best result in this programme is likely to be achieved from a series of non-challenging figures that can be designed to hide shortcomings in pilots' skills; difficult or testing figures are thus normally avoided in favour

of predictably high-scoring but simpler ones. As a result Free sequences often do not present the challenge that each pilot should face at CIVA championships – we are after all seeking to identify World or Continental champions at these events, and to become a worthy titleholder should be a tough challenge.

The SPG proposes that CIVA should consider combining the more interesting aspects of these two programmes into a single new "Free Known" programme, the new process being for example:

- Nations would be requested to submit up to 5 figures to a Sequence Working Group, probably by three months before the plenary. These unrestricted figures should be appropriate for the relevant category, as are those in the Known programmes at present.
- The WG would recommend some – perhaps three – of the submitted figure sets to plenary for the eventual selection of one set.
- Pilots will add five figures of their own choice to the selected set of five to compose a ten figure sequence in accordance with new rules that would be based upon those existing for Free sequence design.
- The maximum-K for each category (to be decided) would be around 450-460 for Unlimited, 300-320 for Advanced and 180-200K for Y52/Intermediate.

Such a new "Free Known" format could achieve a number of valuable goals:

- It would replace the existing Known and Free programmes with a mildly tougher but more interesting test of sequence design and piloting skill.
- It would lead to swifter commencement of the Free Unknown sessions, generally thought to provide the best test of piloting skills en-route to the declaration of champions.
- It would reduce the likelihood of an event not reaching the point at which a championship result could be declared, for example due to poor weather, with one less sequence to fly before the Free Unknowns would start.
- It would provide the 'front end' to a better designed series of aerobatic flying skill tests that would lead to more worthy champions being declared.
- It would provide a broader-based, more varied and thus more interesting test of judging skills, leading to less likelihood of judge staleness and fatigue in long sessions and thus better consistency in judging standards.
- To maintain a 4-sequence championship format, there would need to be up to three Free Unknown programmes - surely a greater test of piloting skills and mental capability.

Aspects that would require attention:

1. With the figure selection briefings for Free Unknowns necessarily one programme ahead of their commencement, the programme-2 Free Unknown figure selection briefing would have to be combined into the initial contest briefing.

2. As the first Free Unknown programme figures would thus be selected prior to the start of this new style Free Known sequence, it would be necessary that this opening programme be revised to exclude free practice time before and after the sequence is flown. The format thus becomes similar to a 'Known' in the original style, with normal warm-up figures only.
3. The pressure on the registration and scoring offices is essentially unchanged, as the Free Known sequences – which would very likely all be different – must like the existing Free programme sequences be received, approved, entered into the scoring system and adequate sets of judging paperwork created before flying can commence.

SPG Proposal #1 therefore is that CIVA approve the formation of a Working Group that will develop a suitable format and structure for this new "Free Known Programme". This would subsequently be considered by plenary as a potential replacement for the existing Known and Free programmes. No further action will be required until this WG reports to CIVA.

SPG Proposal #2: Create a new "Super Advanced" level between Advanced and Unlimited

This proposal aims to reduce the sometimes barely manageable entry at Advanced category championships by encouraging the better pilots to participate in a mildly tougher and more challenging event, to be held concurrently with but separate from the Unlimited championship. On current experience this could attract perhaps 15-20% of the more skilled / experienced Advanced pilots into this new category, and persuade some of the less successful Unlimited pilots to target this simpler championship as they would there stand a better chance of success.

By this means the 80+ number of pilots seen for example at the 2010 WAAC in Radom, Poland and the 2012 event in Nyiregyhaza, Hungary would be reduced to more manageable proportions, and existing Unlimited events bolstered by the addition of a new and interesting class of high-quality pilots who cannot yet – or have previously not wished to – participate in Unlimited level contests.

The goals for this Advanced > Super-Advanced > Unlimited structure would be:

- Fill the gap between Unlimited and Advanced, not limiting Unlimited or advancing Advanced.
- Attract Super-Advanced pilots to participate concurrently at Unlimited level World and Continental Championships. This would provide a better financial situation for organizers and a possibility to keep the Entry Fee at a lower level.
- Provide an opportunity for the higher scoring Advanced pilots to try more difficult programmes and thus gain better competition experience, without overloading themselves and their aeroplanes with Unlimited programmes.
- Provide an opportunity for the lower scoring Unlimited pilots to participate with a better chance of success in a new category that is tougher than Advanced.



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Annual Meeting 2014
Wroclaw - Poland**

Considerable further work would be necessary to define the new Super Advanced structure. This work should be the responsibility of a new CIVA Working Group, which would consider the proposal in detail and provide a report summarizing their findings and any further / consequent proposals for attention at the CIVA plenary in 2015.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Nick Buckenham', is located below the main text.

Nick Buckenham
CIVA Strategic Planning Group chairman, 2014