

Report on future FAI-CIVA Special Aerobatic Events (FSAE)

Nick Buckenham, CIVA President

While the core of CIVA attention remains the World and European (Continental) Championships that have become consolidated over the past 56 years, a significant amount of effort has been directed since the last plenary conference toward shorter category-2 'Special Events' that offer CIVA the most advantageous and flexible route through which to extend the range of aerobatic contest opportunities for our pilots out into the general public domain.

Many such events have taken place throughout CIVA's half-century of activities, memorably the Hilton Masters series of the 1980's, the FAI World Grand Prix of Aerobatics through the 1990's and early 2000's and more recently the Sky Grand Prix in South Africa. These have generally showcased a selected group of 10-15 unlimited pilots through a series of Aresti and other styles of judged aerobatic flights to declare champions within their environment, most importantly enjoying a joint partnership with air-sports



oriented media and thereby greatly extending the connection and prospect between the pilots and their sponsors. Last December CIVA glider and power pilots again took part in the World Air Games, this time in Dubai – a stunning venue (above) where we used the 'runway-in-the-sea' as our base for almost a week of hugely enjoyable aerobatics.

The 2016 Sky Grand Prix was run during May this year in Durban's Greyville Racecourse, adopting a programme structure refined since the previous such event that was held along the



Durban beach front. The ten competitors – four well known CIVA pilots plus six locals – flew Known and Unknown sequences with smoke-on right in the centre of the city, using inflated cylindrical gates to indicate the attitude-change targets that formed part of the judging criteria. The South African Sky Grand Prix promoter Roger Deere has some strong plans for 2017 that are not necessarily confined to his home country, the structure and style of this event being easily set in other locations.

The attractiveness of ‘special’ events to CIVA derives from a combination of their public locations, a short contest duration that is much more attractive to media involvement, the semi-Aresti programmes that combine well-practiced safe figures with showy smoke-on flight styles and have instant appeal to a wide section of the general public, and of course a direct sanction fee return to the commission. Naturally this type of event plays well with sponsors too, where widely distributed visual connections to the provider’s logo and graphics are seen.

A highly desirable element for this commission arises when it can secure a direct involvement in FSAE’s. In these cases a clear benefit stems from the combined status of FAI and CIVA, which significantly raises the credibility of the event in World terms, and a management sharing agreement from which the financial return can be extremely valuable. About 100k CHF is still available to CIVA from the FAI World Grand Prix series, funds that may be dedicated to CIVA development projects specifically approved by the FAI Executive Board. Of course it is important for us to keep adding to this reserve while targeting equipment and/or work areas that will positively benefit our future activities.

World Air Carnival Ltd (WACL)

Negotiations between CIVA and a well-funded joint Chinese-British venture World Air Carnival Ltd started in late 2015, and after many months of discussions and some legal help from FAI we now have an agreement signed by WACL, CIVA and FAI with support from the Air Sports Federation of China (ASFC) that will form the basis for several years of collaboration in the Chinese mainland. Our agreement requires that at least 20% of the pilots at each event must be selected from the ranks of recent CIVA championships, joining others from the world of display flying, and also calls for 3-4 judges and assistants plus a jury member and scorer each time. The officials’ costs of course are fully covered by WACL together, with a contribution to CIVA for each event of 10k USD. WACL are currently purchasing a number of suitable aircraft for invited pilots to fly, enabling each event to proceed with the minimum of transit arrangements being required.



The events that WACL will promote are:

- World Air Masters (WAM) – competitions for mixed CIVA and display-world solo pilots flying pre-defined Aresti style Known and Unknown programmes in a similar style to the Sky Grand Prix.

- Formation Aerobatic Championships (FAC) – competitions for established formation teams from around the world, again with a strong Aresti influence to the Signature and Classic programmes they will fly.

It was expected that the first WAM would be in Changsha, central China right after this plenary, but unfortunately that deal has not been secured. An FAC event however has been agreed for May next year, again in China, and a great deal of interest for this new-style of contest has already been raised.

Other FSAE's

In principle there is no reason why CIVA itself should not approach major air-show organisers with a view to establishing mini-contests in the above style, but here we must be cautious to limit the commission's exposure to the inevitable risks that are ultimately unavoidable. For the time being the Sky GP and WACL style of operations provide the security we need to become part of this much wider scene without hazard to CIVA's good standing and slender reserves.

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

Nick Buckenham
CIVA President