

Elimination Competitions

A paper by Richard Meredith-Hardy, CIMA President, for the 2014 CASI meeting. v1 23/8/2014

Background

There are literally dozens of variants of Elimination Competition schema, perhaps the most common is the Single Elimination, or 'knockout' Competition as characterised in Tennis or the final stages of the Football World Cup. Essentially it is a type of tournament where the loser of each bracket is immediately eliminated from winning the championship or first prize in the event. It is usually laid out in the context of rounds, then quarter-finals (last 8), semi-finals (last 4) and finals (last 2).

This type of competition is rare, but not unknown in FAI Championships; CIAM certainly uses this form of competition in some of their classes.

Current situation

CIMA is beginning to use this form of competition in the final stages of some of its Paramotor Slalom events. It seems to work quite well and is likely to be expanded into the format to be used in Multi-Sport Games such as WAG, Asian Beach Games, World Games Etc.

These types of games need a set schedule, and since an actual Slalom task is very fast, typically 45 - 90 seconds, it is entirely possible to schedule many rounds to within a 60 to 90 minute period. This makes it very interesting for spectators and TV: An all-action, simple competition completed in a reasonable time which results in a winner at a predictable time.

The Problem

This format of competition has already been used in two CIMA sanctioned Cat. 1 Paramotor Slalom Championships, and in fact there were no problems. But it is a little bit like sitting on a time bomb, because if there is a complaint in any one round, or worse, one which leads to a protest, then the whole competition must stop until it is resolved. While everyone agrees the standard system of FAI justice is very effective, it is anything but fast, and even in an accelerated form could easily stop the entire competition for the rest of the scheduled period. This utterly defeats the objective of holding a tightly scheduled event guaranteed to result in a winner. It would not be a happy situation in a CIMA sanctioned event, but it would be disastrous in a high-profile multi-sports games context where both the games organizers, spectators and TV viewers will go away disappointed that FAI could not deliver what was promised.

The fact is the FAI Sporting code does not provide for any alternative system of justice.

Solutions?

This problem was raised on the CASI Representatives mailing list in early July 2014. CIAM seem to cope with this problem by either scheduling long gaps between rounds (eg 1 day) during which complaints and protests can easily be resolved, or if it is of a more rapid nature then they schedule reserve days. Neither of these options seem to meet CIMA's objective.

The consensus amongst others who replied seemed to be that the solution must involve some change to the Sporting Code General Section.

One possibility might be that in certain defined situations the International Jury can convert into a 'Panel of Referees' which has different duties and powers to a traditional jury. Broadly this could

mean the event must be in full view of the panel, they must have instant access to all pertinent information, and is therefore empowered to make unchallengeable decisions in matters of dispute.

There are probably many precedents for this in other sports, one is football where the rules are very clear:

The decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play, including whether or not a goal is scored and the result of the match, are final.

The referee may only change a decision on realising that it is incorrect or, at his discretion, on the advice of an assistant referee or the fourth official, provided that he has not restarted play or terminated the match.

The point here is that everybody knows football referees are not infallible, but they also accept this for the sake of maintaining 'flow of play'. This is the same problem we are trying to solve.

Proposal

There is no proposal this year. This paper is intended to provoke some thought about the matter amongst all CASI representatives before the 2014 CASI meeting.

The intention is that a short discussion at the 2014 meeting might help crystallize a way in which a firm and acceptable solution can be proposed to the 2015 meeting.