

International Jury President's Report for the FAI World Air Games Dubai 2015

29th November to 6th December 2015, Dubai, UAE

Nick Buckenham, Jury President

The International Jury members at WAG 2015 were

- Tamás Ábrányi HUN
- Jürgen Leukefeld GER
- Nick Buckenham GBR (president)

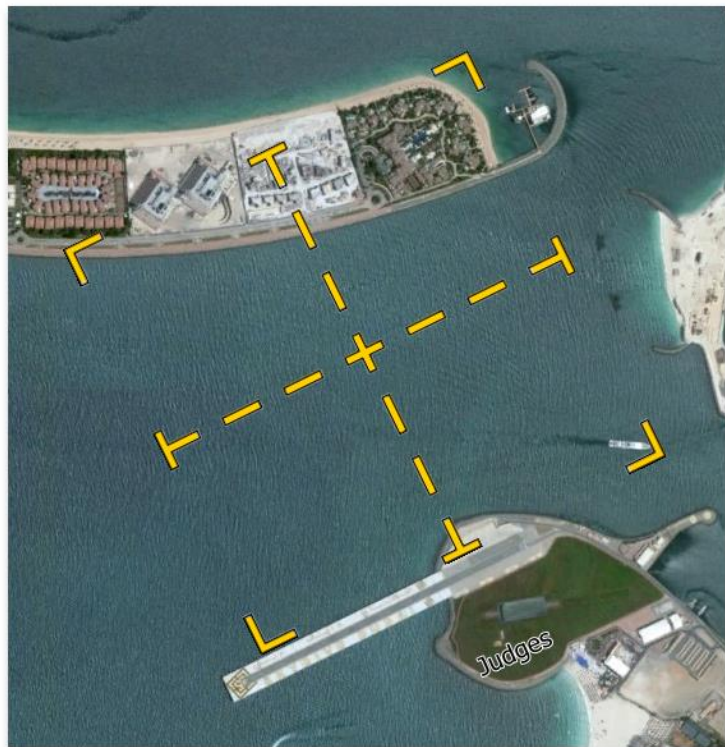
Contest site

The aerobatic performance zone was sited over the sea to the north-west of the Dubai Sky Dive runway, the judging panel being located at the south side of the adjacent grass area that was the operating zone for many other sports and included the parachutists 'swoop pool'.

It had been clearly agreed with the organisers that an emergency landing strip would also be sited in this area, but ultimately that was not created and we thus had no option but to operate without it. In fact the whole grass area was fully utilised by other sports.

All CIVA pilots and officers operated from the north-east end of the runway, the power aircraft arriving daily from an inland airfield base and subsequently being located along the north edge of the aircraft parking pan, while the gliders were stored in the open at the north-east corner of the grass area.

There were no enclosed buildings that could be used in this area, the CD's and scoring offices being located several hundred metres to the south-east within the FAI management buildings.



Communications

Air-band transceivers were available to the CD and CJ; the CD had a single PMR for ground exchanges, all other communications between CIVA officers and the judging line being via personal mobile telephones or simply by walking there – a 15 minute journey.

Glider operations

In the original plan the gliders were to be situated overnight at the separate inland airfield and towed to the contest site each day. This arrangement was dismissed on practical and safety grounds and all gliders and trailers remained at the north corner of the grass area throughout the event.

A single Maule tug was made available for glider towing, the two others promised having not arrived. Also the Maule was not fitted with a mirror to enable the tug pilot to view the towed glider, and the pilot himself had little experience of glider towing operations; a suitable mirror was obtained and installed. In general the gliders departed to the south-west and landed in the opposite direction to avoid wasted time retrieving them from the runway, as it would not have been acceptable to take off while another aircraft was being recovered.

For the glider Freestyle programme the organisers had promised a supply of pyrotechnic smoke devices suitable for wing-tip mounting, and these arrived on-site about 15 minutes before that programme was due to commence.

Power operations

The power aircraft flew-in each day and operated from the apron situated to the north-east of the runway. Refuelling was done by a mobile truck on the apron.

Event scheduling

For reasons not explained by the organisers the planned training days were denied to us, so CD Vladimir Machula rescheduled the first contest day for training. Though this was barely adequate, in view of the lack of remaining available days the pilots all agreed to commence the contest the next day.

There were frequent schedule changes throughout the event, many at very short notice. Ultimately it was not possible for the nine glider pilots to complete the four planned programmes due to lack of time, though the eight power pilots flew all of theirs.

Proximity to other sporting performances

The grass area to the immediate south-east of the runway provided the performance zones for a wide variety of other sports, and there were many close encounters between CIVA aircraft and gyrocopters, paramotors, parachutists, model aircraft etc. throughout the event. The judges were located amid this noisy and intrusive environment, which made their job extremely difficult. They were also obliged to take chairs and tables from the apron area, there being no dedicated seating etc. provided for them.

Safety

With the aerobatic performance zone located entirely over water adjacent to the runway CIVA requested a fully equipped water-borne safety crew with diving and first aid equipment to be in their boats on the water on the north side of the runway throughout all flights. Luckily they were not needed to perform on our behalf, but during the second week after the aerobatics had completed a gyrocopter incident to the south of the runway urgently required their services; the pilot was duly retrieved but unfortunately did not survive.

During the power Freestyle programme one CIVA officer was located at the south side of the runway with instructions to monitor deadline intrusions. As no sighting equipment was available this was done purely by eye, and one pilot was disqualified for gross intrusion over the grass zone to the south of the runway.

Video recordings

As our nominated Flight Director and Video Operator's flight tickets were refused by the organisers at the very last moment, the promised local video recording crew were not made available to us and one CIVA judge was unable to attend due to illness, the missing judge's assistant took over video recording operations with a hand-held device. This was barely adequate to resolve judging queries when required, and though he was situated fairly close to the Chief Judges' desk the high ambient noise generally prevented the recording of HMD beeps during the glider flights. This became a factor in the sole protest, and I have therefore made the following Urgent Proposal to include in Section-6 Part-2 para 2.5.6.1:

The official recording shall be available to the International Jury to assist their decision on any protests. **The audio track must record the audible output signals from the HMD system to enable queries regarding the detected height thresholds to be reviewed.** The recording shall not ... etc.

Incidents

The programmes were run generally without incident except that at one stage the Russian Swift departed the runway edge at the end of its landing run, causing minor damage to the airframe. As a result this aircraft was not subsequently usable in the event.

Protests

The single protest was received from a glider pilot at the end of the event, claiming that a "Low" penalty should be withdrawn. Unfortunately this was submitted immediately before we were all due to attend the hastily convened awards ceremony for aerobatic pilots, and it was not possible to respect the two-hour protest period. We subsequently determined that the video recording of this flight did not carry the audible 'Low' beep from the HMD which the Chief Judge had relied upon when awarding the "Low" penalty. A careful review referring to the available evidence was made early the following week, during which it became clear that the protest should be denied; the pilot was informed accordingly, and accepted this result.

Recommendations

Throughout the extensive period during which CIVA officers and pilots were involved in planning and executing the aerobatics element at this event, there were many confrontations with the organisers that ultimately resulted in an interesting but costly and frustrating exercise for our competitors. CIVA's own early management was not good enough, due largely to unexpected internal personnel changes, but the high cost and complexity of the whole event and the divided responsibilities of FAI and the UAE organisers remain as a sharp lesson to us all.

It should be noted that in May this year the FAI conducted an in-depth WAG Review Workshop that was attended by a range of representatives from many air sport commissions including CIVA, from which a positive process has emerged relating to future World Air Games and multi-sports World Games; the first of the latter, including CIVA glider competitors, will be managed by Pik Kúchler at Wroclaw next August, following the successful 2016 test event there. It remains to be seen whether this FAI driven move toward events with multiple air-sports involvement can viably include both power and glider aerobatics, the all-important cost/reward element remaining the key aspect requiring satisfactory resolution.

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

Nick Buckenham
International Jury President, WAG 2015