AGENDA ITEM 7.3

REPORT OF THE CHIEF JUDGE

25TH World Aerobatic Championships
19-29 August 2009

Graham Hill

The Aerobatic Box

The box was accurately laid out but confusing from the air because of infrastructure on the Silverstone circuit. To overcome this, markers were larger in width (3.0m rather than 2.0m) as required under rule 4.7, and the material was orange day-glow. The centre marker was larger in the length of its arms (36m tip-to-tip) than the minimum required. QinetiQ reported the box centre accurate to within 0.5m to 1.0m. The method was to use 6m poles with day glow off-cuts as flags at all "T", "L" and centre points so that even over quite undulating terrain we could site most of the interim marks, dashes and wind arrows etc. The wind arrows were made of day-glow material attached to rotatable frames to cope with official wind direction changes.

Two markers were built on 60-degree triangular metal frames to permit advertising. Unfortunately, no sponsor was found. From the air, these appeared as normal width markers. I heard no reports of dissatisfaction about the box.

Judging positions

Four cardinal judging positions were set up, the only unconventional one being the West position which had to be built on 3.5m platforms so that judges would not have to look through high wire fencing.

Judges Currency paper

The paper was issued later than I would have liked, eventually being e-mailed by Mike Heuer

to all judges. This paper was discussed with the whole judging team as part of the CIVA Judging Seminar held on the 18th of August.

As usual, there were a considerable number of errors and, interestingly they tended to be common. Questions 1, 2a, 11, 16, 21b, 22, 24 and 25 had errors between 30-80% wrong. With the exception of question 16, these all related to judging criteria (appendix 1 is a copy of the questionnaire).

The paper included questions concerning issues other than straight criteria topics. The non-criteria questions centred on the "how" of judging regarding methods of assessing radii of curves, teamwork in assessing rolling circles, consistency of assessing 45° angles etc. This was more to get judges to consider their approach to consistent judging, and an opportunity to exchange ideas. For example the "Tuula Bartholdi" method of position marking was mentioned, as well as the "near near left left" system and John Gaillard's grid system. All of these have merits – the main one being that they give the judge a basis of consistent judging rather than "That did not look too bad, give it a 7.5!

Part of the Judges currency paper was written with the idea of highlighting areas of uncertainty within the rules, so that the judging panel could discuss and agree a consensus to the grey areas and then, at the main judging briefing where team managers could attend, we could advise what to expect from the panel.

I sought agreement from the Jury for a ruling on flight that was considered too far out of the box for sensible judging. The Jury advised that if the figures were too far away to be judged or indeed seen then a HZ would be appropriate. Any flight that could be seen but was compromised by the distance would be severely downgraded.

Briefings

Briefing content was kept as simple as possible for language reasons covering safety issues; the increase 20 metres in height for all levels because of the Porsche building, and radio calls for intrusions and safety.

When using the Olan software pilots were asked to remember for future contests to use a larger font for the forms "B" and "C" for the (3x4, 3/4 etc.) roll notation for their free programs. Mike Golan, originator of the program, was unwilling to increase the default font, saying that in his view this is the pilots' responsibility. I feel that in future organisers would be within their rights to reject forms "B" and "C" when the minimum font is used. I cannot understand why pilots would want to risk a misreading of their forms.

Pilots were reminded of rule changes and accepted practices in applying the rules; lines before and after half loops, and the incorrect use of free breaks, etc.

Practice flights

On the practice days before the "Q" the judges marked eight flights. Accepting that there was little data there was reasonable consensus, with only two judges tending to mark a little high.

Communications

After testing and ironing out all the communications equipment all the systems worked very well for the duration of the contest.

"Q"

The "Q" was flown with out conferences, other than those required to clarify the usual HZ vs. Soft Zero issues. The intention was to allow the "Q" results to have more authority than when it is used as a judges training session for judges.

The accident, together with the lost day and a half, and continual weather stops did not give us ideal judging conditions. This was further aggravated by the pressure to get flights moving because of the above, and accepting that we would have minimal warm up flights. The resulting RI's were in my view affected by all this, and both Nick Buckenham and I feel that they should not be used for record for the selection of judges.

The QinetiQ system worked perfectly throughout the "Q".

Interruption of flying

On Saturday 22nd Vicki Cruse died in an accident during her Q flight. She entered figure 5 – a pull-push-pull humpty with 4x8 up, and on the vertical down a 1¼ positive snap. The aircraft failed to recover from the downward auto-rotation. The judges were called together and requested not to talk to anybody concerning what they saw and we returned from the southern position to the briefing tent.

There was no further flying that day or the following day.

On Thursday after many weather breaks the "Q" was completed.

Judging support

All the requirements, as noted in the draft Contest Director's handbook, were met in term of refreshment, paperwork, tables, umbrellas, portable lavatories and chairs etc.. Refreshment was provided regularly and sandwiches provided when lunch was not possible due to time pressures.

Video

Fortunately the video system was not frequently required. However when it was used the clarity of the picture on a good quality flat screen was better than I have seen elsewhere. Phil O'Donoghue and Joanna White did an excellent job with the whole video operation, and were able to identify the required pilot and figures with ease. They worked efficiently and without fuss. We owe them heart felt thanks.

Programme 1 and the 1st Unknown

Programme 1 was completed by Friday afternoon, and after a break we started the first unknown, but weather and low cloud intervened.

4 Minute Freestyle

A short briefing was given to the judges and any pilots who wished to attend. Judges were reminded of the rules, given a note of the relevant pages in Section 6 of the Sporting Code, and requested to read them before flying commenced. Each judge was provided with a record sheet so that they could prepare a comparison of marks for each pilot before submitting their official marks sheet.

The marks were processed by ACRO for normalisation and results reporting, but in discussion with Nick Buckenham we would have to say that the production of RI's for this type of marking would probably not give any meaningful result regarding the competence of the judge.

15 flights comprised the 4-minute free.

Judge Ranking Indexes

In accordance with the rules I issued the judging analysis sheets to all judges after both the "Q" and the Free Programmes. I asked judges not to take too much notice of the analysis for the "Q" for reasons already mentioned and after discussion with the President of the Jury.

The analysis for the Free was very good, and only one judge had an RI that was considered to be somewhat high. Each judge was given the opportunity to discuss the judging analysis.
I was very happy with the judging panel especially considering the high degree of time pressure and reduced time for breaks. They all handled these difficulties with cheerful helpfulness, and I thank them for making my job so much easier.

Assistance

Finally, just like a judging team on the line, the CJ's desk only works well with a team that knows what they are doing. I was exceptionally lucky in having Nick and Jen Buckenham. I owe them a really big "Thank You".

QinetiQ

John Gaillard is writing a report on the QinetiQ line and height judging system. From my point of view it was faultless and worked very well indeed. It was used for height (low and high) as well as boundary infringement.

Protests

There were no protests.

Authorisation of pilots at Unlimited level for International events

I have looked at both the penalties and the scores for pilots at WAC 2009 who have failed to attain 50%. I except that on occasion a pilot may have a lapse and zero a couple of manoeuvres, but not demonstrate dangerous or really poor ability to control the aircraft. In other words they do not leave the impression that they are behind the aircraft.

On other occasions pilots not only score less than 50% in the "Q" and their own chosen free, but leave one with the impression that they are at real risk of an accident.

Pilots should expect not to continue to fly, if they fail to achieve a 50% average over the "Q" and Free, but might be permitted to continue after review with the Jury and Chief Judge to see if there were special circumstances. For example, a scenario that would include a couple of manoeuvres in the wrong direction plus insertion and interruption, drastically reducing the score, and no indication that the flight was unsafe, may result in a pilot being permitted to continue. It must be clear that the onus is on the pilot to convince the Jury that it is safe for him to continue. It must also be clear, however that the emphasis will be to err on the side of safety.

In the case of 2009, five pilots failed to achieve an average of 50% over the “Q” and Free programs

Pilot A	44.84%	8 penalties all types
Pilot B	41.53%	6 " "
Pilot C	40.43%	5 " "
Pilot D	33.53%	8 " "
Pilot D	22.05%	7 " "

Between them, these 5 pilots incurred just over 25% of all the penalties! (Total for the two sequences was 135).

Therefore, I would propose that at any international event the Chief Judge may require the pilot(s) who do not achieve an average of 50% or better must have a discussion with the Jury and Chief Judge to determine if they should continue with Unknown 1 and 2 and the 4 minute Freestyle Programmes.

In addition I think the Bureau should have the discretion to write to appropriate division of the NACs to require that in the event of such poor performance that they are happy to re-validate such pilots' ratings as "Unlimited" pilots.

Finally I think it would be a good idea for all pilots competing at International level for the first time, to produce a document signed by the appropriate person in their NAC (e.g. Chairman/ President of the aerobatic section) to the effect that to the that pilot is of the required standard.

Graham Hill
Chief Judge W A C 2009

Photos courtesy of Nick Buckenham and Graham Hill