IGC Stewards Report

32 FAI WGC in the 15m, 18m and Open Classes
Uvalde Texas 4th to 18th August 2012.

Overview.

The competition was very well organised and characterised by superb soaring conditions and generous hospitality provided by the families and businesses of the host city, Uvalde. There were 13 contest days and one rest day. Tasks were well set and allowed competitors to take full advantage of the unique soaring conditions for which Uvalde is famous. The longest distance flown was 714 km and the highest speed achieved 161.0 kph. The average task distance in the 15m Class was 512km and the average winner's speed was 142kph, in the 18m Class the average task length was 540 km and the average winner's speed was 148.7kph and in the Open Class the average task length was 583km and the average winner's speed 149.1kph. In total there were 1274 launches and of these only 48 landed out or didn't complete the task

Where there is criticism in this report, this is intended to be constructive and in no way intended to devalue the tremendous amount of good work that has been done by the Contest organisers and the many other dedicated volunteers involved with the preparation for, and running of, this competition, which by any standards was a magnificent success.

1 ORGANISATION

1.1 Overall organisation

- The Contest Director was Ken Sorenson and his deputy was John Good. Both are current competition pilots and organisers. They have flown and directed competitions from Uvalde on previous occasions. Linda Murray was the Contest Manager and she managed all the administrative issues.
- The members of the organisation were drawn in from all over The United States and this, combined with the fact that there was no active gliding club on the airfield, compounded the difficulties of establishing the organisation and a coherent command structure.
- It proved difficult to engage with the organisation in the early part of the year when countries were trying to register their teams through the web site. The situation was corrected in March.

1.2 Quantity of officials.

- All the officials were eminently well qualified for the jobs they performed.

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1.3 Experience of officials.

- The principal officials were experienced glider pilots and competition organisers with experience of running competitions at Uvalde. The secondary aspects of the organisation where less experienced people were employed were well managed by the experienced officials.
- Scrutineering was done under ideal conditions in a large enclosed hangar by a very efficient and well organised team. Initial problems with scale mass capacity (for Open Class gliders) was rectified by a back-up scale,and several open class gliders were re-weighed as a result. A few competitors were re-weighed during the contest at their request, resulting in slight changes to tow-out mass.
- Daily weighings were well organized on the taxiways leading to the grid and efficiently carried out each day. The same scales used in the original scrutineering process were utilized and proved to be accurate and consistent.
- Removal of instruments to allow blind flying: A number of gliders were fitted with digital instrument systems that included embedded artificial horizons,and in addition scrutineers had no way of knowing what other portable devices the pilot might have. To cover this situation all pilots signed a document in

which they acknowledged that the use of blind flying instruments was prohibited by the rules and that such use was regarded as cheating. A copy of the letter is attached.

- Safety Pays Working Group survey: All pilots completed the survey which included simulated emergency cockpit evacuation. The survey results and some conclusions are attached.

1.4 Suitability of meetings and briefings: The pilot's briefings were held in the SWJC gymnasium a large hall used for basketball. There was ample room for the pilots, and all had tables to work on. Crews were seated in a balcony area used for spectators. The lighting was good, and the sound system was loud and clear, but there was no free roaming microphone. This area was not air conditioned and on some occasions was oppressively hot. Briefings were succinct, dealing only with essential business.

Team Captains meetings were held in a smaller, air conditioned venue and regulated by an agenda.

1.5 Suitability of weather information

- Extremely well presented with probably more information than most teams or pilots could use.
- The forecasts were mostly accurate, as can be seen from the minimal number of pilots that didn't complete the task.
- Updated weather information was available to all teams.

1.6 Suitability of facilities.

General.

- The various components of the infrastructure were very good in their own right, but because they were widely dispersed there was no general meeting point for pilots crews and organisers.

Airfield

- The Airfield is a municipal facility and in active use by general aviation and the organisers didn't have unfettered use of the airfield.
- The facility has one main runway (15/33) and a full parallel taxiway 5000ft in length. The main runway was used to launch 15m and 18m Classes and the taxiway used for Open Class. Both runways were used for landings, and pilots were required to land long. The prevailing wind is from the south, and the majority of landings were in direction 15. The finish ring had a minimum height of about 200m above the airfield elevation, and this gave pilots enough time to plan their circuits and integrate themselves with other traffic in the pattern. There were additional dirt runways to be used in the event that the two paved runways became saturated.
- The tie-down area was situated at the far end of the airport on the west side. There was space for all the gliders and trailers. There were several watering points in each row, and gliders could be watered up by hose pipe at their tie down spot. The area was covered by Wi-Fi so that flight records could be sent to the scoring office electronically.

Administration

- The entire contest administration was housed in one building. The reception area, which included the team mail boxes and the Official Notice board, consisted of a single corridor. While this was very convenient for the organisation it was very crowded for competitors and inaccessible to the public.
- Pilot registration was handled efficiently, with great attention to detail particularly, with respect to pilot licences.

Social

- The organisation provided a large events tent, which included picnic tables, food and beverage booths, a stage and several commercial booths. It also housed two large monitors for visual displays of tracking while gliders were on task and results later in the evening. .
- In addition, a VIP tent nearby provided complimentary food and beverages for pilots and crew at the end of the competition day.
- Neither area was heavily utilised except when there were team parties. This was a pity because a lot of effort was put into arranging the facilities and getting sponsors for the food and drinks for the teams. The problem was twofold. Firstly, not being fully enclosed, and having no air conditioning, they were just too uncomfortable, and teams preferred to go back to their team offices or their lodgings. Secondly, these tents were on the east side of the airfield that could only be accessed by leaving the tie-down area on the west side of the airfield and driving round via the public road, a journey of some 2.4 kms. Many pilots went straight from the tie-down area to their hotels and relied on the internet for access to results.

1.7 Transportation

- A rental car was provided for the use of the stewards and jury. The Chief Steward and Jury President arranged their own hire car. There were no sponsored vehicles provided by the organisers.

1.8 Information dissemination.

- Email and SMS messages were used to inform Team Captains of meetings, task changes, need for resubmitting flight records, etc.
- Results were posted correctly on the official notice board.
- Task sheets were available in team pigeon holes prior to briefing.
- Team Captains meetings were called on a regular basis usually prior to the main pilot briefing. These meetings addressed detailed issues that Team Captains were expected to convey to their teams.
- All important information was provided in written form to teams.

1.9 Pilot assistance.

- Pilot Licensing. This was an onerous procedure, part of which required some pilots to have an FAA Biannual Flight Check. The organisers had produced a clear guide for pilots and arranged for a two seat glider and FAA rated instructor to be available at the site for pilots who needed a BFC and had been unable to arrange one before their arrival at Uvalde.

1.10 Retrieval.

- Very few actual outlandings and no outlanding damage.

1.11 Launch control for fair access and efficiency:

- The launch was efficient and well managed. 12 tugs completed the launch in about 1hr 15min.
- Gliders requiring a relight were serviced correctly.
- Main runway and taxiway were used for launching and the main runway was closed to all other traffic during this period.
- The tug approach pattern effectively closed the grid area once the launch had started. Given the unpleasant conditions on the grid, the organisers provided marshals to manage access and egress during the launching phase so that crews could retire to their comfort zones once their gliders had been launched.

1.12 Opening and closing ceremonies including presentation of Jury and Stewards:

- Formal opening followed an extensive parade of cars, trucks and floats of participating nations that travelled through the streets of Uvalde ending at the football stadium. National teams were introduced to the public in the stands as they paraded into the stadium.
- Contest officials, stewards and jury members were presented.
- The closing ceremony was held at the airfield and complied with the FAI protocols.

1.13 Other social events.

- There were many social events, and the organisers had done an outstanding job mobilising the support of Uvalde businesses, families and individuals. The hospitality received by all visiting teams was simply outstanding.
- Pre-competition evening was organised at a Sports Bar, opening party at Community hall which included meal and gifts, national evenings in the main tent, mid-contest rest day event at a river resort.
- Final party at Sports Bar.
- Each national team was hosted by local families or businesses, who arranged private events for the teams as well as floats and transportation during the opening day parade.

1.14 Total number of scheduled days and number of contest days.

- Competitors were able to fly on all of the 7 practice days, and all of the 13 competition days. There was 1 rest day midway through the competition.

1.15 Media liaison

- No media room was provided for journalists.
- www.wgc2012uvalde.com was the official web site. In January the site did not keep pace with developments and this trend continued into the start of the competition with the presentation of scores, but this did improve. The web site provided two blogs. No statistics were available for web site hits at the time of writing this report.
- 32nd FAI World Gliding Championships-Uvalde, Texas USA - official competition Facebook page - average 2,000 likes and views daily
- www.soaringcafe.com - published official posts from the website, as well as independent coverage by Ritz de Luy.
- Newspapers/ Magazines: Uvalde Leader News, San Antonio Express News, Texas Aviation, Aviators Hotline, AOPA magazine, Aerokurier Germany, Gliding International, Soaring Magazine, Texas Monthly
- TV stations: KSAT 12

1.16 Public and Internet display of real-time aircraft positions and information

- Tracking of five pilots in each class was available on internet through a link provided on contest web page using the Way Aero Tracking system.
- SPOT tracking of participating SPOT users was also available on the internet.
- Two large-screen monitors in the event tent showed the above during the flights. After flying was over the screens were used to display the results. Additional screens could have been provided to allow display of each class separately.

2 **RULES.**

2.1 Adequacy of Local Procedures.

- The LP's were developed from those used at previous WGC and tailored to the airfield logistics at Uvalde. These were published in February after consultation with the CS and the Annex A group Chairman.

2.2 Addendums or changes.

- During the practice period the rules were applied as written, but it became apparent that the 2 minute rule for starts was creating a situation that was more dangerous than the one it was designed to prevent. In consultation with the TCs it was agreed to replace this rule with a speed restriction for crossing the start line, the wording was taken from the GP rules. However after further consideration it was realised that this rule also increased the pilots "in cockpit" work load, and during the competition no altitude limits were imposed.
- The LPs neglected to include a procedure for running a sustainer MOP after take-off, suitable words were taken from the LPs of previous competitions.
- The finish ring radius was extended to 15km on days when there was a risk that the airfield would eclipsed by thunderstorm activity and the finish height was increased proportionately.
- A northerly landing procedure was published when northerly winds were forecast.

2.3 Fair applications of Rules and Local Procedures.

- The rules were applied fairly to all teams.

2.4 Possible improvements of Rules and/or Local Procedures.

- It is our opinion that all ideas to control the start height are flawed in some way and that the best solution is to have no limit, allowing pilots to maintain a good lookout. In sites where there is the possibility of wave a sporting limit should be imposed, but this would be above the convective layer. We would suggest that Annex A should be changed so as not to allow organisers any flexibility in this regard.
- The wording to allow pilots to test sustainer MOPs should be part of Annex A, not an optional part of the LPs.
- The procedure for publishing Preliminary, Unofficial and Final results and the time limits for complaints and protests should be clearly specified in Annex A, with a time table to remove all ambiguity.

- Clarify the class of penalties that, if incurred during the practice period, are carried forward to the contest period and when they should be applied.
- The requirement to physically remove blind flying instruments remains in Annex even though we know that this requirement cannot be met. See earlier comments. This rule needs to be updated.
- The wording in Annex A for the lodging of start times need to clearly state that any start time handed to the organisers has to refer to a valid start. The background to support this change is that a team was found to have lodged false start times for their pilots. When confronted with the evidence they defended their action, saying that they interpreted the current wording in Annex A to mean that only valid starts need to be accurate. The organisers deemed this to be unsporting behaviour and the team concerned was given a warning.

2.5 Task setting and operations.

- Task setting struck a good balance between using the weather conditions to the full and creating tasks that could be completed by the majority of competitors.
- All aspects of the operation were handled professionally, safely and efficiently not withstanding the hot, dusty and often windy conditions, which are inescapable aspects of gliding at Uvalde.

2.6 Scoring system (use and application) Scoring complaints forms:

- SeeYou was used for scoring, and the authors were in Uvalde for the practice week to support the system.
- The scoring team managed the system efficiently and scores were produced in good time, except that there were occasional corruption of flight records submitted through the internet links that delayed the publication of the unofficial results.
- All scoring complaints were required to be submitted on a complaints form and these were dealt with expeditiously and in writing.

2.7 Protest handling and registration.

- The registration process was efficient.
- There were no protests.

3 **SAFETY.**

3.1 General safety of the event

- Safety was of primary concern throughout the contest. Several mandatory safety meetings were conducted at intervals during the practice period and there was a mandatory safety briefing prior to the first contest day.
- The German Team Captains complained that the organisation's response to retrieving the pilot who bailed out after the mid air collision was inadequate. The organisers followed their emergency plan and the only point that could be criticised was the time that the pilot who baled out spent waiting for assistance to arrive. The organisers were in mobile phone contact with the pilot and knew that his situation did not constitute the sort of emergency that warranted launching a helicopter ambulance. Civilian authorities launched a ground recovery operation but took longer than expected to reach the pilot. A civil helicopter was found and despatched to pick up the pilot. It is our opinion that the German Team Captain's criticisms were unwarranted.
- A safety box was provided next to the official notice board, but no comments or suggestions related to operational or flying safety were received.

3.2 Occurrence of incidents and/ or accidents.

- There were two mid-air collisions during the contest. The first, during the practice period, involved two gliders from one country that were team flying and had a "light touch" that resulted in minor damage to the gliders involved. The second, during the last days of the competition was severe, resulting in the pilot of one glider bailing out. The other glider was able to return to the contest site but the damage to glider prevented any further participation in this competition.
- During the practice period a relighting glider did not follow the relight landing procedure and executed a dangerously low circuit that was in conflict with launching gliders. The pilot was awarded a 50 point penalty that was carried over to the championship.

- In addition, there were many reported incidents, any one of which could have resulted in a serious accident. These were investigated by the Safety Steward and where necessary discussed with the pilots concerned.
- A self launching glider used the entire runway length trying to get airborne and inexplicably continued the take off until it ran off the end of the paved section of the runway onto a very rough undershoot area before aborting the take-off. The glider was severely damaged and unable to continue in the competition.
- There were very few outlandings and no outlanding damage.
- The Safety Steward made frequent safety presentations at briefings and where appropriate he referred to incidents that were reported. The IGC's safety videos were used to reinforce specific situations.

3.3 Availability of medical personnel.

- A doctor was on-site throughout the contest and either treated individuals or referred them to the hospital in Uvalde. He also presented short safety lectures at the daily briefings on hydration, nutrition and fatigue.

3.4 Use of safety officers

- The Safety officer was in attendance at all times during launching and landings.
- There was excellent teamwork in recovering landed sailplanes from runway.

3.5 Launch safety:

- With the exception of a very near miss between a self launching glider and a tug and glider combination just after take-off, the well rehearsed launch routine was conducted safely.

3.6 Pilot skills relating to safety.

- There is no doubt that the pilot's skill is of a very high standard but, given the number and nature of incidents that were reported, it is clear that pilots are quite prepared to put themselves and their fellow competitors at risk, to gain a competitive advantage.

3.7 SPWG Initiative.

- The IGC Safety Audit including emergency cockpit evacuation drill was well received by pilots.
- Pilots were awarded points for safety features and gliders above the qualifying threshold were awarded a Safety 1st sticker to display on their gliders.

Dick Bradley.

Art Grant