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Helicopters - Parallel fender

WHAT IS THE PARALLEL FENDER COMPETITION?

This is a race between two helicopters and their crews involving precise manoeuvring. Once the two crews are ready and the co-pilot is holding a length of rope with a boat fender attached, the race is started by a flag. The pilot is guided by the co-pilot to manoeuvre the boat fender clear of the ground and through the first start gate. Once past the first gate, the crew attempts to place the fender into each of three containers half a metre in diameter passing through a new entry gate for each container. The length of the rope to the fender is between 4 and 8 metres and after each successful container drop the rope length will be changed by the copilot to a predetermined length which is indicated by red marker balls attached to the rope. The pilot can not see the fender and can only respond to instructions given by the co-pilot, which requires exceptional team work and lots of practice.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO DO TO WIN?

The winner is the crew which drops the fender into all three containers within the time limit of 60 seconds and with the least number of penalties. Penalties are given for touching the ground, missing entry gates, infringements of rope lengths, touching container with the fender and failures of putting fender into containers. If there is a tie between the two competitors, the one completing the course in the fastest time is the winner. A maximum number of points is 300 with penalty and time points being deducted to arrive at the crew's score.

HOW IS IT SCORED?

The race timing is started by the dropping of a flag once the judges have given the co-pilot the cord attached to the fender and the helicopters are in the start position. The timing stops when the co-pilot has dropped the fender and rope into the last container. The course judges verify that the helicopter has successfully passed through each gate and dropped the fender into each container. They also note penalties for every other infringement. The chief judge collates the information from the line judges to calculate the crew's total score.

TELL ME MORE!

The events in the FAI World Air Games have their origins in the first World Championships for helicopters in the 1970's. The competitive tasks performed in this event emphasise the skills pilots use when engaged in SAR (search & rescue) operations. The competing pilots come from all areas of helicopter operations; commercial, private, military, search & rescue and police. Helicopter competitions are a very international affair. Major championships have been held in Germany, Great Britain, France, USSR/Russia, USA, Austria and Poland. The FAI World Air Games events are derived from the World Championship events with some changes to assist those new to watching air sports to understand the skills involved.

Helicopters play an increasingly important role in our society; many lives have been saved by the heroic action of helicopter pilots in all parts of the World. The development of smaller and less expensive helicopters has brought the possibility to become a helicopter pilot within the reach of many more people. Professional and helpful helicopter flying schools can be found in most countries, most people with reasonable co-ordination and aptitude can learn to fly a helicopter, but to attain the level of skill demonstrated by the pilots competing in the World Air Games takes many hours of practice and training.

« *Tight teamwork and precise piloting* »