

EVENT DEBRIEF

65th Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett St.Gallen, Switzerland. 10th September 2022

The meeting opened at 11:00 with a roll call.

There were 15 teams present, 16 crew members and 8 officials.

The debrief followed the event timeline, from registration to check-out.

Registration

There were no comments about the registration process from the competitors.

However the organisers were not happy about the process and lacking information and support from CIA. There was an issue with one entrant where information was missing and was also late.

Check-in

There were no comments about the check-in process from the competitors, they all agreed that it was quick and easy.

General Briefing

Competitors felt that there was adequate information about Met, ATC and competition area. The Deputy ED outlined that there were some issues. 3 balloons had incorrect transponder Hex codes, transmitting incorrect registrations. 1 with transponder problems and 1 with radio issues. He reminded competitors that this was the “premier balloon event” and competitors should have adequate working systems to ensure that they can complete the flight.

Some competitors also felt that there were some problems with ATC communication, with calls made but no response received from the relevant ATC.

Inflation

There was a comment that the limited number of people per balloon (6) was too low and more should have been allowed, The Safety Officer outlined the reasons for the limit, and some discussion ensued.

There was also a discussion about the sand supplied, that it was wet and due to the freezing level, was a cause for concern. It was agreed that “dry sand” should always be available for Gordon Bennett Events.

Launch

All agreed that the launch was quick and well organised, however some competitors felt that the way the “Netted” balloons were launched caused the ascent rate to be excessive, due to their slow acceleration. Most of the balloons launched about 2m/s but the netted ones were up to 8m/s. The DED explained the logic for the launch rate but understood the issue and would add to the “lessons learned”

**The DED / Launchmaster responded to the statement saying. We struggle to see the argument of ‘acceleration’ for a netted vs a net less balloon
To achieve a climb rate of 8m/sec, a 100% filled balloon would need to drop 256 kg of ballast at take-off (= 3 men releasing their full weight at the same time).

Even if this had happened, the balloon would not have levelled off at 1500 m AGL (which they claimed); for that one typically uses 3-4 bags.

Flight

Some competitors experienced difficulties when contacting Munich, long waits for clearances, but most probably due to high ATC workload at the time and balloons not a priority.

There was a question about the restriction of Class A & B airspace. The ED explained in the General Briefing and in this meeting that Class A & B was for IFR traffic and the competition was VFR and therefore you could not enter. This was making a level playing field for all.

Further discussions about the event not being at the period of the "Full Moon" Some competitors felt uncomfortable flying over the mountains and not having visibility with the peaks. Others felt that technology was freely available with all the information required.

It was suggested that the CIA should not sanction other events that conflict with the full moon date in September. It was explained that the conflict this year was with Albuquerque and having enough time between the GB to get equipment to the USA. There was also a conflict with the World Hot Air Balloon Championship in Slovenia.

Media

There was a request for feedback as to the number of views of the media, that was distributed by GBTV.

Results

The ED gave an explanation of the reason for the penalty applied to AUS1, after the results were Final. This was because of an official complaint from Austro Control about the balloon entering controlled airspace without permission. When an external complaint is made by ATC, or any other official body the director is required to investigate the issue and take whatever action is necessary. In this case a 2% distance penalty was applied.

Check-out

There was a request that check-out times are adhered to, as the organisers have many other duties to perform. There were only 7 teams that checked out within the times published.

General

It was noted that communications were only sent to the competitors, but it would also be useful if it could be sent to the co-pilot and crew. The ED stated that he distributed information to every team that had passed details to him. It was suggested that a team group email address could be used to automatically distribute the information.

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Jury President
65th Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett

** Updated DED / Launchmaster response.