

AGENDA ITEM 7.3

REPORT OF THE CHIEF JUDGE

World Advanced Aerobatic Championships

Radom, Poland
5-15 August 2010

John Gaillard



1. General Comment

This was the largest international aerobatic competition held to date, with an initial 85 competitors from 25 countries; it was obvious from the outset that the Judges would have their work cut out to complete the competition in full, even if the weather remained flyable throughout. The fact that this was achieved despite some initial bad weather, which caused delays in the Q Programme, is due to many long hours and limited breaks in what can only be described as a heat wave on many days.

I pay tribute to all those judges, assistants and contest officials who put in the effort with a minimal amount of complaints, their efforts saw a successful conclusion to this contest with all programmes flown, the judging line was as follows:

Judge

Jan Maxen – DEN
Kimmo Virtanen – FIN
Bernard Courtois – FRA
Isabella Borowik – GER
Violeta Gedminaite – LIT
Maciej Bialek - POL

Quintin Hawthorne – RSA
Vladimir Kotelnikov – RUS
Lyudmyla Zelenina – UKR
Tom Adams – USA

Chief Judge Assistants were:-

Klein Gilhousen – USA
Irma Janciukiene – LIT
Jan Gawecki – POL

Assistant(s)

Lars Allerhed – SWE
Otto Ahonen – FIN
Jerome Houdier – FRA
Helga Bohlig – GER
Algis Orlicka – LIT
Zbigniew Zuvek – POL
Beata Zuvek – POL
Laszlo Liszkay – RSA
Vladimir Popov – RUS
Sergey Kryvoruchko – UKR
Chris Rudd – USA
Pat Sowder – USA

2. First General Briefing

At this comprehensive briefing, detailed procedures were explained by the Contest Director as to how he wished to handle the starting procedure, this involved the use of a dedicated safety frequency to be monitored by the Chief Judge and Control Tower and the use of red & white flags to release competitors for both takeoff and entry to the aerobatic box. A contest radio system was in place where various officials were to communicate; this included a link to the Judging line and Tower, who were then to instruct the actual starters to release competitors at the appropriate time. It had already been established due to the position of the judging position most likely to be used in prevailing winds (southern side) that direct communication between the judging line and starter would be difficult, this position being in a hollow and not giving good line of sight to the starters, communication to the starter would therefore have to be via the control tower.

The Team Managers were called together after the main briefing and asked if they had any objections to the waiving of the CIVA Regulations on Judges breaks, as it was apparent from the outset that every bit of flyable weather needed to be used and it might not be possible to strictly adhere to the requirements of the regulations in this matter, no objections were received. My apologies to the Judges & assistants, but if this contest was to be flown out in full, we simply had to use every minute available.

3. The Judging Positions

Three judging positions had been prepared to the south, east & west of the aerobatic box, all had been set out very nicely and had portable toilet facilities, each judging position had been cleared and levelled and good seating and umbrellas had been provided, the Chief Judges position featured a large covered awning and was excellent. Due to the prevailing wind the southern position was mainly used and this was in a dip and below airfield level, this not only caused line of site problems with the starter not being visible, but also made communication to other ground stations problematical.

On the second day the airfield was struck by a violent thunderstorm and the southern position because of its location became flooded, the organisers quickly reacted and placed many of the judging positions on wooden pallets, which made the area habitable, this worked out rather well and did not hinder operations unduly.

4. The Q Programme

From the outset it was apparent that there would be difficulties with communications, as Polish was in use by the contest organisers and the supposedly dedicated VHF safety frequency was sometimes interrupted by persons unknown speaking Polish (probably the control tower). This concern was put to the Contest Director, who undertook to make every effort to clear any surplus traffic from the frequency. Only

15 flights were flown on the opening day without incident, weather interrupted the second day and it was only on the third day that the Q Programme really got going in earnest.

Towards the end of this day a very unfortunate and potentially disastrous incident occurred, the aerobatic box was being used by a French pilot who broke off during his sequence to reposition himself in the aerobatic box; at this point in time another competitor from the USA took off and also climbed into the aerobatic box. I immediately attempted to call both pilots on the emergency frequency without success as the frequency was being used in Polish by persons unknown (but likely to have been the control tower), this situation persisted for what seemed to be an eternity, but in reality might have been for less than one minute, but what was clear is that both aircraft were doing aerobatics in close proximity.

Eventually the frequency became clear and both pilots heard my “break, break, break” call and were both asked to land, I immediately cancelled flying for the rest of the day until a fresh procedure was put in place and went across to the hangar to speak to both pilots and to apologise for the communications breakdown. It is still not clear to me how the pilot from the USA was released or who was speaking on the radio, typically after such an incident everyone immediately becomes defensive.

5. Revised Radio and takeoff procedures

On reviewing the situation it became apparent to me, that the person operating the Tower had taken it upon himself to determine when a competitor was to be released, this was simply not acceptable, the following procedure was then put into place and briefed to all teams the following morning: -

- a) That only the Chief Judge would determine when a competitor was to be released by means of a communication from the Polish speaking assistant at the Chief Judges workstation to the tower, who was then to relay this message to the starter with the flags at the holding position.
- b) That a new radio frequency be allocated, being 129.00 and that only competitors and the Chief Judge would use this frequency.
- c) That shortly after takeoff the Chief Judge would initiate a radio check with the competitor and then release the competitor into the box.
- d) That in the event of no communication being established between a competitor and the Chief Judge, the competitor must land without entering the box.

The above procedure should have ensured that no further incidents of the type experienced in the Q Programme, unfortunately this was not to be the case and further incidents of pilots either taking off without permission or because they had been released incorrectly continued to occur throughout the contest, although at no time were two pilots again both flying aerobatics in the box simultaneously.

Amazingly two naturally English speaking pilots managed to get this simple procedure incorrect the first from the USA did not respond to my calls and then entered into the aerobatic box, I took the action after the flight of asking his Team Manager to give me a written explanation of what had occurred before the briefing the following morning, his explanation was plausible and he claimed to have heard my transmissions and having seen the previous competitor land assumed the box was clear, he was given the benefit of the doubt, but the Contest Director once again at the next briefing placed emphasis on the box entry and takeoff procedures.

A second incident occurred a few days later, when a Russian pilot had broken off his sequence having incurred a HZ and found himself in the wrong direction, before he could continue a British pilot had taken off and was holding behind the judges, despite all my efforts no contact could be made with this pilot, I therefore had no alternative but to ask the Russian pilot to discontinue his flight and land, which he immediately complied with. The British pilot having not established any radio contact then entered the aerobatic box and flew his sequence, on completion of his flight I asked the Assistant Contest Director to immediately investigate the circumstances involved; he established that the wrong radio frequency had been set in the aircraft's radio.

As this pilot had broken the procedures as briefed and caused a potential dangerous situation, I informed the British Team Manager that pending investigation he was disqualified from the Programme. Subsequently the British protested this decision and the International Jury overturned the disqualification, this is covered in their report and is therefore beyond the scope of this report. It should be noted however that the Russian pilot's contest was compromised as in his subsequent re-flight he incurred an additional HZ for a figure already flown and scored the previous day (as per CIVA Regulations relating to re-flights).

However on at least four other occasions competitors either ignored the takeoff procedure or alternatively were given permission to takeoff incorrectly, it was not possible to establish the true facts on these matters, but I had the distinct impression that the Control Tower still considered that they were in charge of releasing pilots rather than the Chief Judge, on all these occasions communications were established with the competitors concerned and no further incidents of two aircraft in the box occurred, on one of these occasions I was happy that Irma Janciukiene was at my side as she speaks fluent Russian and was able to advise a Russian pilot of the situation in his own language.

The final incident occurred a few flights before the end of the contest, when we were in the eastern judging position and no more than 250 metres from the starter who was now in full view. A Russian pilot in his penultimate figure in his sequence decided to break off (probably to avoid being low) as he followed his

procedure of wing dipping, I immediately saw the starter drop the white flag allowing the next competitor to takeoff. On this occasion I can say without any contradiction that the blame was entirely in their hands (The Tower or Starter) as absolutely no communication had taken place with the tower from the judging line, they were simply acting independently and I strongly suspect this to be the case throughout.

To summarise a combination of poor contest communication in a language not understood by various essential contest officials, namely the Chief Judge and Contest Director, together with an apparent lack of cooperation or willingness to comply with agreed procedures is a recipe for disaster.

This situation must never be allowed to repeat itself and it is recommended that in all future competitions CIVA recognise and appoint a Flight Director as part of the contest approval procedure, in the same manner it appoints a Chief Judge and Contest Director, this person to be responsible for coordination of all aspects of releasing aircraft and flight operations.

6. Contest Programmes

The balance of the contest programmes were flown out in full, when conferencing was required this was undertaken in breaks or after conclusion of flying on the judging line, it was never necessary to carry these to the following day or to conduct revisions off the judging line. In order to save time the contest organisers did a very good job of delivering lunch to the judging line when appropriate, thus saving a move off line to the cafeteria, this occurred only when a change of judging position was not necessary. Throughout the judging line was kept in good supply with snacks and drinks.

7. Judging Performance

The judging line was made up of seven CIVA judges and three invited CIVA judges, in practice due to some negotiations upfront with the contest organisers, the Polish Aero Club who generously waived the entry fees for the CIVA invited judges, coupled with the CIVA Bureau decision to extend the travel expense allowance to all judges, all judges therefore in effect operated on an equal basis.

This aspect of how to handle Judges will be subject of a discussion at the next CIVA meeting, with a view to establishing a firm policy, rather than tackling these issues on an ad hoc basis. The judges performance analysis is provided in the CIVA agenda packages, the Q Programme is shown separately from the combined overall analysis of the scores which established the championship results.

I was happy with the performance of the judges and no real issues emerged on the judging line. The invited Judges from France, Lithuania & Poland all performed very satisfactorily and are a welcome addition to International Judging Community. Reference to the overall analysis shows a range of RIs from 11.47 to 18.07 all fairly consistent, one judge is well outside of this range at 27.17 it had been apparent during the contest at various times that he had applied IAC procedure rather than CIVA procedure, this had led to a series of HZs following a single HZ which had been applied by the other judges, this probably accounts for the poor RI and it can only be emphasised how essential preparation is for an International contest is, should procedures applied at home contests differ from those of CIVA.

Perception zeroes had been discussed thoroughly at the initial judges briefing, there did not appear to be any significant issues at this contest with regards to perception zeroes and this topic will be the subject of a recommendation to CIVA from the Judging Sub-Committee and is therefore not included in this report.

Perhaps it is an indication of judging performance, that to my knowledge no protests were received on matters pertaining to the judges, other than for disqualifications due to alleged violations of the take off procedures and entry to the performance zone, which will be dealt with in the International Jury's report.

8. Conclusion

The fact that the largest CIVA Contest held to date was successfully flown out, can be attributed to the Contest Organisers, The Contest Director, the Assistant Contest Director and the Board of Judges, when it was required to push all concerned acted accordingly.

The only negative situation which unfortunately cannot be ignored is the incident that occurred with two aircraft from France and the USA flew in close proximity in the performance zone, with a simultaneous failure of radio communications due to outside interference on the allocated safety frequency. Subsequent discussions with the assistant Contest Director Vladimir Machula have almost certainly attributed this situation to the Polish Control Tower operator, who despite being specifically briefed on numerous occasions, still continued to release competitors when he thought appropriate, rather than on the instructions received from the judging line. The fact that he could speak no English was a contributing factor, as he apparently attempted to resolve the fact that he had two pilots in the box at the same time by attempting to contact them on the safety frequency in Polish, which in effect blocked my own transmissions from the judging line, thus making matters even worse.

This is not the first occasion that such a situation has occurred at a contest, although previously the incidents never developed to the same extent as on this



occasion, these incidents also involved communications problems from the judging line to the starter due to line of sight problems with hand held radios and to a lesser extent language issues.

It is recommended that CIVA take firm action in order to avoid similar situations in the future, this involving the creation of Flight Director position at all contests, with a CIVA approved exact procedure for controlling entry to the performance zone, the unfortunate fact remains that this contest could easily have gone down as one of the worst ever due to a mid-air collision, rather than a largest contest ever held, only a few seconds determined this and it can never be allowed to happen again.