

AGENDA ITEM 8.3

REPORT OF THE CHIEF JUDGE

17TH European Aerobatic Championships

2-12 September 2010
Touzim, Czech Republic

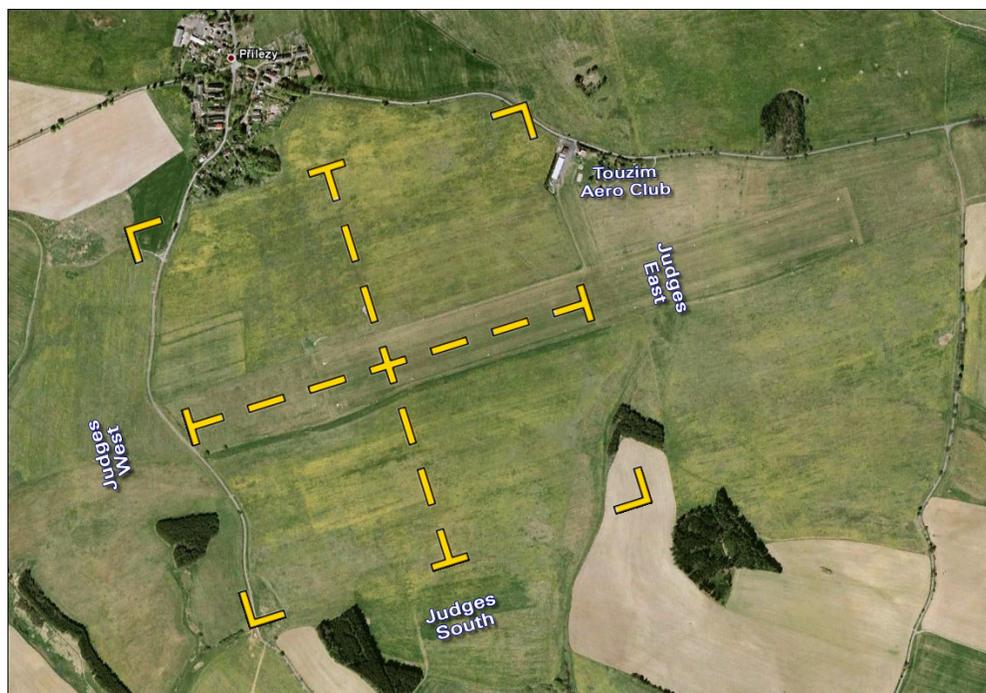
Nick Buckenham



Box layout and judging line facilities

The CJ team of three – my assistants Peter Macintosh and Jen Buckenham, and me – were kindly collected from Prague airport and driven directly to Touzim airfield two days prior to the opening ceremony. Touzim has one grass runway 26/08 with access solely from the north central area adjacent to the parking zone and the hangars. Heavy rain during the week prior to our arrival had left many parts of the runway soft and wet – in fact the airfield was closed to traffic, but the north / central area was marked at both ends to indicate the preferred take-off and landing strip.

The box layout used the runway as the main E/W axis, the hangars and club-house being located just outside the NE corner. An excellent new two-story facility had recently been



erected next to the hangars for registration (ground floor), with a large Chief Judge / Jury room and a separate Scoring Office on the first floor. Two WiFi channels were available for all to use, and a laptop-projector for wall display during the Judging Seminar.

At this stage the box markers were mostly in place and the locations for judging areas prepared to the east, south and west of the box, and most of the tents required to provide shelter for reviewing the video, storage of refreshments etc. were already erected. Touzim airfield is generally flat, but slopes down a little to the south judging position and rather more to the west – from the former the runway was visible although woods to the west of our position restricted the view of the SE corner of the box below about 60m altitude, not considered a problem. From the westerly location walkie-talkie radio communications were poor and aeroplanes could not be seen until shortly after take-off. The east position was on the south edge of the runway close to the 26 threshold, and thus ideally located. Drive-time to all positions was less than ten minutes, allowing rapid deployment of the judging panel when required.



The box markers were of bright-white material and carried 'Leki' promotional printing. Although these looked to be about the right size, a subsequent inspection by Peter Macintosh showed them to be little more than 1 by approx. 7m. This was not considered an issue, and pilots reported that the box was clearly defined from the air.

Once the championship started the judging line facilities were excellent, with a dark-green military style tent (excellent for video-watching) permanently at the west and south positions and a smaller shelter for refreshments and storage of personal items. Chairs, cushions, tables and umbrellas were all of good quality, allowing judging to continue unimpaired whenever flying was in progress, and there was a chemical toilet at each position.

The Judging Team

After some awkward late withdrawals from three judges – Luis Alvarez, Spain (associated with recognition problems from the Spanish national aero club), Tamara Dovgalenko, Ukraine (lack of funds) and Timo Bartholdi, Finland (for personal / family reasons) – the minimum acceptable number of seven judges were:

Mikhail Bezdenezhnykh	Russia
Georges Brocard	Switzerland



Francis Itier	France
Vladimir Kotelnikov	Russia
Algis Orlikas	Lithuania
Gabor Talabos	Hungary
Lyudmila Zelenina	Ukraine



A Judges Seminar and Team Managers Briefing was held the day before the opening ceremony, and a broad range of subjects discussed. I particularly encouraged the judges to pay close attention to flick-rolls, spins and tail-slides where ‘perception’ zeros should be applied for unacceptable execution, and also because there would be no line-judges at this event the implementation of a formal method of position grading from each judge was strongly requested.

Judging the Championship

Just one warm-up pilot – Nicolas Ivanoff – was available throughout all sequences. He flew the box sides, minimum heights and cloud-base checks promptly whenever requested and his sequence flying was to a high standard. The availability of only one warm-up pilot was fine, and allowed the event to proceed with the minimum delay at each session.



All judges and assistants acquitted themselves well throughout the championship, with very few instances of missed downgrades or significant differences between their marks.

Points for further consideration

Perception downgrades

During the event a notable cause for concern related to one judge who took my SZ encouragement to heart and awarded significantly more soft zeros than the others for figure elements where he considered that the pilot had not adequately met the perception criteria – i.e. flick-rolls, tail-slides and spins. His RI after the “Q” flight was higher than all the other judges, mostly because FPS rejected many of his minority SZ grades and consequently his ranking of several key pilots was seriously affected and of course his RI rose as a direct result. Based on considerable past analysis, many conversations with judges and my first-hand experience at the EGAC/WAGAC and EAC events this year I have a real concern that experienced judges, on seeing a perception element that is doubtful rather than obvious, are



often taking an over-cautious view to protect their RI in case the majority of other judges give a non-zero mark. In my view it is essential that judges have the freedom to express their views in these fleeting judgements without fear of retribution from the scoring software, and a separate proposal is being developed with the aim of releasing perception zeros from RI penalty by the FairPlay system.

Judging Station positions

Even though the judging stations were well spaced, while perhaps not 15m apart, there were a couple of occasions when I observed judges conferring at the end of a flight and had to request that they immediately resume their stations to ensure independence. Although I doubt that any genuine collusion took place I took steps to separate the judges concerned at the next session. Because complicity could occur at any time and is not easy to catch, I believe that it would pay us to formalise a change of position allocation for each day to ensure that each judge regularly has 'new neighbours'. A simple solution would be for judges to select a numbered card on arrival at the judging area to determine where to sit, and this would also underline the need for absolute independence in all judging matters.

Communications

The organisers provided us with three Icom air-band transceivers, a mobile phone pre-set with a dozen or so key numbers for officials and team managers, and a rather cheap walkie-talkie. The Icoms were fine but the walkie-talkie often unintelligible from the judging positions, and thus the mobile phone was essential to enable frequent comms between us and the CD, jury etc.. It is hard to over-emphasize the critical importance of good communications between all the dispersed officials, and although the mobile phone worked quite well a group of PMR's (portable mobile radios, like the Motorola 340's that were so good at Silverstone) are a far better and easily enabled solution.

Radio frequencies used

In order to allow the Touzim airfield RT operators to manage the movement of competitors aeroplanes in conjunction with other possible visitors they planned to operate two discrete frequencies – their normal 122.600MHZ for ground control and 128.325 MHZ as a safety frequency for pilot communications with the judging line. CIVA 4.2.1.6 expressly requires the sealing of radios to prevent frequency changes by competitors, but for this event all the a/c radios remained able transmit/receive on any frequency, and the jury did not consider this an issue. Some re-wording of 4.2.1 to accommodate un-sealed radios might be a good idea. See also my 4-minute Freestyle comments, below.

Marking of the Warm-Up pilot

Judges Form-A marks were submitted to the scorer for the warm-up pilot on several occasions – perhaps for the first time – and these were entered into the scoring system. A modification to the software was quickly made to allow the scorer to optionally include / exclude these marks in the results calculations, so that the quality of the warm-up pilots' flights vs. the other pilots could be seen or removed. Nicolas Ivanoff's final ranking would have been quite good!



The video recording, and real-time internet streaming

The video operators and their equipment provided a good quality service and were able to quickly re-play any competitors flights. The medium sized LCD video monitor output was particularly clear within the dark military tent.

It became apparent from the outset that the local IT / Video team expected to be allowed to stream the judging-line video straight to an internet page, for distributed viewing. This is expressly denied by CIVA rule 5.1.6.1, viz: “ *The recording shall not be available to competitors or Team Officials at a World or Continental Aerobatic Championship, except in conjunction with the International Jury's decisions on protests and with their agreement.*”. In discussion with the jury it was felt that this could only enhance the non-present public's appreciation of our sport, and hence was allowed. Later discussion with several key teams revealed that almost no-one knew it was available, they were all outside watching the flying! The jury president expressed the view that rule 5.1.6.1 was probably written many years ago when video streaming technology was not feasible as it is now, that a more 2010 view might be to allow such a transmission throughout, and CIVA rules should perhaps be modified accordingly.

Clarity of Rules

A small number of unclear rules were noted:

- 5.3.3.1 b). “*the remaining segment of the turn or loop ...*”. “*.. unflown ..*” would be more appropriate.
- 6.8.3.6 b). In rolling circles: “*If a flick roll is performed, the figure is zeroed.*” I think this should specify the soft zero as a flick would be a perception, but one could argue that the pilot would benefit from a hard zero as this would require a majority agreement from judges and thus provide a more secure result. Something for the Rules Committee.
- A competitor reported the cloud-base as 780m and on the radio asked “Fly or no-fly?”. In accordance with CIVA 4.2.2.4 a) ii) I instructed the pilot to land and immediately reported the circumstances to the jury. The rule says that “*.. the Chief Judge, after consultation with the International Jury will discontinue competition flights*” but in practice consultation is almost impossible within the required time-frame. Rule 4.2.2.5 gives pilots the option to make their own decision and land under these circumstances, but since 4.2.2.5 f) could easily lead to their disqualification if a subsequent jury flight found conditions to be OK they may be very reluctant to use it in marginal cloud conditions. I understand that this situation led to further discussions between the pilot and the jury, and would suggest that better clarity here would be beneficial to all parties.
- The removal of the ‘free break’ when cloud previously between 800m and 1050m (3,450 and 2,650ft) disperses is difficult to get authorised and applied whilst the CJ carries out the usual busy and constant series of work requirements. I suggest that this should be an independent responsibility for the jury or perhaps some other technical



official reporting to them, so that the Chief Judge can receive formal instruction as to when the free break should be applied and also subsequently removed.

- Regarding the accuracy of pilots Free sequence drawings that have been checked and accepted by the Contest Officials according to 4.3.3.8 ... one pilot's Form-B that showed a pair of figures starting and finishing on the main axis but requiring flight on the cross axis between them incorrectly showed the 1st figure end and 2nd figure start as if on the main axis. Three judges gave hard zeros for both figures, while the other four judges gave non-zero marks. In accordance with CIVA 4.3.3.12 I annotated both figures as Confirmed Hard Zero on the CJ's Flight Summary Sheet. The pilot protested the decision, and after overnight cogitation the protest was upheld by the jury and the CHZ rescinded. The three HZ judges were then disadvantaged by their FPS rejected HZ's, so I requested that their HZ grades be reset to "Av's" in order that their RI's could remain unimpaired whilst the pilots score would be unchanged. Clarity of 4.3.3.8 is required to ensure that any repetition of these circumstances leads to clear and immediate resolution.

Music and the 4-minute Freestyle

For the 4-minute Freestyle a number of competitors had requested that music be played for their sequences – in other words, audible to the watchers (judges, competitors and hopefully members of the public at the aero club) and also to be transmitted to them so that they could synchronise their flying with the output that those on the ground were hearing. Unfortunately no provision had been made to accommodate this requirement by the organisers, so an ad-hoc arrangement was quickly established whereby the safety frequency was adopted as the music transmission channel in order that the pilot could hear it, whilst communications between the judging line and the airfield RT operator remained on the airfield frequency. The pilots used the safety frequency to trigger the RT operator into starting the music feed. In an attempt to relay the music to the judges I placed the spare Icom on a chair in front of the central judging area, but even at full volume it was barely able to compete with airborne engine noise.

In fact the RT operator had simply placed his microphone against the audio player's speaker, which for the first flight resulted in an overloaded buzzing. On one or two subsequent flights the system did work, but the solution was generally ineffective and totally compromised the safety frequency – to contact the competitor we would have had to ask the tower to stop the music transmission so that we could speak directly to the pilot, hardly an ideal situation. At future events proper facilities should be enabled so that all interested parties can hear the music at a sensible volume and without compromising the safety frequency – clearly some proper planning is required for this.

Incidents

There were two relatively minor incidents during the championship. Both occurred during the landing of competitors aeroplanes following their sequence flights, and both resulted in significant damage to the aeroplane but none to the occupant. No action was required from the judging position, save that judges remain in place and then return to the club-house area on the CD's instructions. The second of these led to the cancellation of the 4-minute Freestyle - no doubt both incidents will be detailed in the Contest Directors Report.

Box incursions

One box incursion occurred during a "Q" sequence flight when a locally based aeroplane arrived at about half-box height from the east and evidently did not communicate with the tower, and when inside the box executed an unexpected diving turn to land towards the east on runway 08. An immediate "Break-break-break" radio call to the pilot ensured that he rolled erect and could be guided away from the conflict. Once the incursion traffic had landed I suggested to the pilot that he could continue his sequence with the figure he was in process of executing, which we would re-mark as if it had not already been flown, following a suitable period of composure. He agreed to this, and flying continued as before.



Judges meals

Judges meals were taken along with the rest of the assembled company, and were of good quality. It would help to formally establish that the judges and assistants should get queue priority whenever the team returns from the field positions, as time is often short and a swift return to duty essential.

Also the frequent delivery of fresh coffee and biscuits to the judging line was greatly appreciated, particularly late in the day when it was pretty cold out there.

Results and Awards presentations

I was very pleased to be asked to announce the results for the medal and trophy awards at the closing ceremony. In my view it is fitting that the Chief Judge handles this job, although a little fore-warning for personal preparation would have been appreciated.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alex B. B. B.', located at the bottom right of the page.