11th European Microlight Championship
6. – 14. August 2010
Sywell/Northampton (UK)

Organisation

The event was organized by The British Microlight Aircraft Association on behalf of The Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom on behalf of the FÉDÉRATION AÉRONAUTIQUE INTERNATIONALE FAI.

Due to some unpredictable and deeply unfortunate circumstances the key person and former chairman of BMAA had to resign as Contest Director in between preparation and has to be replaced properly just eight months before the beginning of the championships.

Specially in face of that and a limited budget, the overall organisation was very professional, efficient, effective and friendly – chapeau!

Competition officials

Competition Director:	Paul Dewhurst
Event Director:	Rob Hughes
Scoring Director:	Richard Meredith-Hardy
Chief Marshall:	Jeremy Hucker
International Jury:	José Luis Esteban (ESP), President
	Tom Gunnarson (USA)
	Wolfgang Lintl (GER)
Stewards:	Naaman Tam (ISR)
	Gerhart Gerecht (LUX)
	Roland Schneider (GER)
Monitor:	Vladimir Silhan (CZE)

All officials were well experienced with national and international Championships, either as organizers, competitors or officials and formed a highly prefessional and efficient group.

Staff operating

Every function within the kernel operational framework was manned by one person without deputys. So especially the Directors and the Chief Mashall had to remain fit in action continuesly – and they did!

The number of Marshalls on hand was very small, so that Stewards had to assist them. The extremly efficient organisation and motivation of the Chief Marshall led to sufficient joint action.

Administrative infrastructure

The competition bureau – offered by Flylight Airsports - was nearly all time accessable for registration and the administrative work to do. An office right above on 1st floor with a towerlike view on the airfield and quite beneath a reasonable cantina was provided for jury and stewards.

A part of the Flylight hangar was separated und office equipted used as scoring and logger download area.

The briefing room – located just in the very neighbourhood of the competition bureau – was adequate but sometimes crowded when more than one member of the national teams dropped in. It was equipted with a white board and a screen; if nescessary with a computer and beamer. There was no permanent videotaping of briefings.

Flylight hangar was also used as hall for the opening and closing ceremony as well as for performing social events (come together...italian food on invitation of the italian team etc.).

Competition preparation

Months before starting the competition, the local regulations had been clearly defined and were published together with a substancial task catalogue including the scoring rules on the competition webside, so every potential participant was able to prepare himself properly.

Several notices concerning Sywell and surrounding airspace were brought out as well as fundamental hints and advice for approaching Sywell from abroad.

All participants received an excellent map covering the competition area. Written task descriptions and collections of were of very good quality. As far it could be inspected all given coordinates had been valid.

There was no extensive weather briefing but an appropriate one. The possibilities for additional selfbriefing were limited by the capabilities of reachable internet sources.

The intention was to run the competition as a paperless one only on the basis of a wifi-net and a competition intranet site. But: the choosen intranet approach could not be completely realized and tested before starting the competition and caused many problems and resentments among participants.

Airfield

Sywell Aerodrome is a very well organised certified airfield with mixed traffic but microlightfriendly.

Due to "normal operating" there were some slight restrictions effecting the competition. For example no task could begin before official opening of the airfield at 0900h, means: tower manned, fire services activ etc.

Sometimes it was necessary to establish coss traffic situations. To seperate competition traffic from normal traffic, different circuits were used; timegates for competitors taking off created, sometimes competitors had to use runways cross to the main winddirections and other traffic. Althougt briefed beforehand (local regulations and other informations) and additionally briefed again nearly every day/task especially the different circuits and many well defined no-fly zones remained an continous problem for some competitors.

Accomodation

The Aviator Hotel at the entrance of Sywell Airfield and a kind of entrypoint for the public was a comfortable but expensive choice.

Most of the competitors therefore used the camp site, specially prepared for the event or went to B&B or hotel offers in the near surrounding.

It took some time to establish a sufficient electric power supply; the amount of installed toilets and showers was permanently criticized.

There was no central offer for food; the alternatives so were self catering or visiting the aviators restaurant or Pilots Bar at Flylight site or another two restaurants near by.

For the staff only a large tent supplies hot and cold drinks and a choice of sandwiches, fruits and candies.

Operations

Pilot selection and experience

The selection process expected ensured that all competitors were experienced and capable and well coached by the national teamleaders.

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1st revision october 23th

The official entry list involved 98 competitors with 57 aircraft from 12 countries. One none-competitive participant with a two seater autogyro who take part on the most tasks has to be mentioned.

Class	Pilots	Aircraft	Countries
WL1	16	16	8
WL2	48	24	11
AL1	/	/	/
AL2	34	17	8
Sum	98	57	12

The complete drop out of AL1 must be dealt with seriously. It was definitely not an organizers fault – big, even material efforts were maid to lift up the attractness of this class.

Aircraft

The attention of conformity of an aircraft to the competition rules was done by self declaration of competitors.

The organizers offered the possibility to check the actual weight of the aircraft, standard equiptment and crew. This offer – left to crews own discretion - was not broadly accepted and when, often by crews which thought it to be obligatory.

All participants must be aware of being weighted at any time during competition. This was practiced in 2-3 cases with partly marginal results (pilot has to leave jacket and shoes on ground).

The method of random inspection seams to be very efficient and effective. Anyhow this implicates a noticeable disruption of the competitions flow.

Ground operations

At the beginning of the event very few marshalls were available, so stewards and in some cases jury members had to occur.

During the whole competition the marshalls team remains unstable in size and manning. It is owed to the experience and effectiveness of the Chief Marshall and some few very experienced – because former competitors –marshalls, that all went pretty well.

Total number of contest days/tasks

The intention was, to run as much tasks as possible wasting no time from day one on which was sometimes not mirrored by the staff available.

There were 6 contest days with 5 navigation, 1 economy and 9 precision landing tasks. Unfortunately the 12th of august had to be cancelled due to bad weather, so three nav/eco/prec-tasks failed.

The given possibility to a one day extend of competition using the 14th of august was not chosen with good cause – the bad weather forcast.

So the proportions between tasktypes specified in the rules – specially concerning Economy and Precision landing could not be fullfilled completely.

The paperless approach

This attempt contrasts to the rules given in Section 10. Provision is made for using a large and centrally located and equally accessable display where all announcements, notices, results etc. should be published. Aside all teamleaders and officials had to be provided with the permanent flow of printed information (the traditional pidgeon boxes) to be able to follow the process of competition permanently.

These EMC were applied to be"paperless" means: all informations were only available via intranet.

The main precondition of such an approach is the existence of a complete and reliable system with equal opportunity access to it.

If as in the EMC 2010 case this precondition was not permanently given by technical reasons (week and slow intranet, problems running internet and intranet in a parallel way...), this led to unequal conditions for different competitors.

The creditable attempts of the organizers to improve the situation by installing additional repeaters and antennas weren´t the solution. It was on one side the patience of the effected teamleaders and on the other the comradeship and active help of the well equipted and highly engineered teams which face less problems towards others. So one may say, that a technical dysfunction constitutes tighter relations between the teams. Especially facing strict budget restrictions the paperless attempt is a charming one – from the organizers point of view. Referring to participating small teams with small budgets and with limited technical facilities this turns into a massive problem and constitutes a severe disadvantage concerning competition. It might be an unreasonable demand asking a small team which is in truble with the travel expences and the competition fees to be then naturally equipted with last generation computers and colour printers and paper and so on. This is simply a transfer of budget load to the contributers side. It must be the ambition of FAI and CIMA to activate and encourage even less powerfull teams to participate in future transnational events like EMC or WMC.

Scoring

Scoring was done on basis of well prepared and tested data/algorithms. The transfer of data from flight recorder(s) into the evaluation system was easy and experienced.

So it was a competion with rapid scoring. Individual results, over all (provisional) results were issued within very short time. The fact, that every ordinary typing error or confusion between datacells was published very rapidly, caused a mass of pre-versions of the results, which led to some heap of irrelevant waste.

A strong tool was provided by Jose Luis Esteban who has improved his experimental track review system which made the tracks – combined with a google earth view - from all competition navigation flights available to all contributors.

Ceremonies

The Opening Ceremony as well as the Closing Ceremony were passed in a dignified manner and kept remarkably short.

Media

One focus of the EMC was to demonstrate our sport to the public. It is not easy to decide – from a prior inside view and far from having the opprtunity reading local and regional newspapers or listening to relevant radio stations or watching tv - how and to what extent this had been successfull. There was a reasonable public participation to the event noticable, spectators, spotters, families and so on. The organizers, especially the Event Director, invested much time and "good words" looking after a TV Team, intensively supported by all participants, to make them document mainly the viewy parts of the competition – precision landings but also views from above (minicameras on bord of competing aircraft.). Unfortunately there was no hint at all that anything of that material has been telecasted, whereas positive public effects concerning the "classic media" can be surely assumed.

Social interaction

Pilots and teams interacted closely and with good humor and with few "national team impact".

To aid one another was a lived normality. Three evening parties – one prepared by the Italian Team – were triumphantly held.

It was a competition, characterized by "fair play", without "tactical" claims or complaints.

Suggestions

- Modification of the rules to reanimate the RAL1 class in future championships is urgently needed. The invention of the new 120kg-class (mainly single-seaters) in the UK and D for example might be anticipated but not waited for.

- There is also an urgent need of redundant information systems for publishing/covering the whole process of a competition. One may be driven by inter- or intranet tools but this has to be accompanied by a system of "classic" central board with paperwork and a simple announcement system (bell, sirene...) which also meet the options, possibilities and boundaries of less capable (technical and financial) teams/bodies.

- In this context there might be a need for a re-design or of modifying the system of financing and refinancing transnational events.
  The proper financing of such an event is a serious risk for a potential organizer. Any attempt which is able to reduce this risk (less overhead fees, assistance finding sponsors, active marketing including the creation of income) for the organizer must be used.
  Travel amounts, competition fees and so on are large barriers not only for small nations or national bodies to participate in. The aim to encourage them and create new participation of national teams must be accompanied by financial incentives, for example by reducing or waiving fees – of course not at the expense of the organizers.

Roland Schneider
Oktober 2010