

CIVA Strategic Planning W/G Report 2017

When this Working Group was instituted in 2012 its Terms of Reference were to identify subjects that might be developed to CIVA's advantage by thinking broadly and with minimal constraint about strategic aspects of aerobatic competition.

During the past six years the SPG has played a key role in the development and introduction of many new concepts and regulatory changes relating to the commissions well established category 1 'classic' championships. Other more specific subject areas have largely been the province of their own teams – for example the Section-6 Part-3 FAI Special Events Regulations for the World Air Games and The World Games, and the Part-5 inaugural Formation Aerobatic Challenge.

During the 2017 season CIVA classic championships in Yak-52, Advanced and Unlimited glider, and Advanced and Unlimited power have been successfully completed without any notable requests to examine alternative conceptual or regulatory solutions, though as usual they have triggered calls by various contest officials for a variety of minor rule changes or additions that plenary is asked to consider in the usual way through our Urgent, Safety and President's Proposals.

i) In-bureau strategic proposals

Triggered partly by some unsuccessful proposals at last year's plenary in Bucharest, CIVA Vice President Castor Fantoba has developed a series of far reaching propositions whose aim is to bring many aspects of our classic events in line with more modern world-class sporting standards. These for example relate to whether glider aerobatics can be an Olympic Sport (already an FAI consideration through The World Games at Wroclaw this year), Pilot Ranking or Seeding Lists, the issue of CIVA 'Super-Licenses', revisions to category titles to be more media-friendly (e.g. Acro-1, Acro-2 etc.), and the admission of Commercial Teams – this was discussed but not approved last year. To debate these major subjects at plenary without a range of well-developed solutions would be time-consuming and risky, so I propose that items which relate to classic events should be assessed during the next year by this existing SPG, and items more suited to review within a wider commercial remit should pass to the new Task Force proposed in para (iii) below.

ii) Other classic aerobatic sporting developments

The FAI has been busy this year developing its The World Games (TWG) and Air Games Tour (AGT) concepts to encourage commissions to devise shorter / smaller contests based on their classic events and join with other FAI commissions and non-aviation quasi-Olympic sports to create major events that showcase all of these sports at a single location. For TWG at Wroclaw in Poland this year CIVA was tasked to select 12 (eventually 11) glider pilots who flew their G1-G4 programmes on four consecutive days at Szymanów Airport about 12km north of the city, alongside Canopy Piloting and Paramotor flying – Pik's report describes CIVA's contribution to this multi-sport event

(there were 31 other non-aviation activities) in some detail. For this CIVA developed revised Section 6 Part 3 regulations based largely on our well proven classic event structures, the result being generally well received – especially the programme-4 glider Freestyle with smoke-on (with wing-tip pyrotechnic devices in this case). We may see this concept again, though the proposed FAI event at Wuhan in China does not include CIVA aerobatics.

iii) Non-classic event developments

On several occasions this year, both within and outside our community, we have discussed the possibility of creating a separate stream of short events specifically conceived to showcase unlimited pilots in a fundamentally commercial and media-driven environment, as opposed to the more common solution of adapting our classic aerobatic structures and then seeking the help of an organiser willing to combine the result into their event. The envisaged flight programmes would be created specifically and without compromise to suit this all-aerobatic public theatre, leaving the classic category-1 and 2 championship structure that we have developed since 1960 unchanged. An exemplary illustration of this genre is the Red Bull Air Racing (RBAR) series where a group of unlimited pilots and aircraft that are extremely familiar to us enjoy a strongly commercial setting in which through good management they have achieved an outstanding level of media recognition and financial independence. Other similar ventures in recent years have achieved a welcome but somewhat variable degree of success – the Sky Grand Prix events in South Africa have worked well, while the Jean-Louis Monet inspired FAI World Grand Prix series (no less than 26 events from 1996 to 2008) is perhaps the most successful example.

The fact is that we have a small library of documents reaching back over 25 years advocating a similar set of aims, though they have generally sought to adapt and change the classic event structure to achieve the improved media and commercial enlightenment that is so tempting. It is apparent however that to have any likelihood of achieving our aims we need to start afresh and for the time being continue with our classic championships in their existing well developed style.

In my view therefore CIVA should preserve the Strategic Planning W/G in its current format with responsibility as now for all strategic issues relating to classic championships, and create an entirely new Task Force dedicated to developing a working structure for the above new commercial / media oriented events. I would like to give this the title “Media / Commercial Task Force” (MCTF) and with plenary’s approval launch this with a remit to seek advice and instruction from every possible resource in order to construct a business plan for review by plenary in 2018. I am confident that through further discussion at the 2017 plenary we can determine the appropriate members and create a positive format for the MCTF Terms of Reference.

Compiled by NHB
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