

The Formation Aerobatic Challenge event in China

Before this event had even begun, a meeting was held with the Aero Sport Federation of China in Beijing, who specifically banned holding a contest due to safety concerns. The fact that this move was totally illogical and that it is an established fact within the World of Aerobatics, that competitions add to the safety of an event, was not accepted by the Chinese and will no doubt be the subject of much debate in the future, however for this event it was agreed to hold an air display, with the judges acting as “Safety Officers” and an agreement in place not to publish any results.

Nevertheless, we had appointed judges and they were on site, so it was agreed purely from a CIVA internal point of view to carry on with the judging exercise, but not issue any results even to the teams themselves.

On this basis the CIVA Judges carried out their work, it was in fact an interesting exercise and perhaps in many ways it was just as well, that a formal ranking of the teams was never published, as this format of contest was new to both judges and the teams themselves.

It is therefore not appropriate to write a report on the judging, which never officially existed in the first place, but the exercise did highlight some issues, which have been listed below.

- a) The definition of a Formation Team needs to be clarified, at this event we had Teams ranging from two aircraft to nine aircraft, clearly comparisons of how sequences are flown are extremely difficult for the judges, I personally would be inclined to define a formation team as a minimum of four aircraft.
- b) The figures for the Classic Sequence were interesting in particular the “Butterfly Loop”, when flown well this figure looked good, however some of the teams simply never got on top of this and it was hard to distinguish the intended figure, the common error being the second loop was generally commenced at a point long after the first loop, therefore giving no butterfly effect at all.
- c) With regards to FAC Formations (4.4 of the regulations) this clearly is not appropriate for two ship formations, similarly 4.5 of the regulations.
- d) Signature Programme 2, is simply too long and should be reduced in time in my view to a maximum of five minutes.
- e) OK it was not a contest, but some teams seemed to be doing their own thing, breaking into two divisions and with individual performances (breakaway in airshow terms), the regulations need to be quite specific on this, as to whether it is allowed on how to grade them.
- f) The entire wording of section 3.2.6 of the current regulations needs to be revisited and amended, there are inappropriate and factual errors.
- g) At the end of the event it was decided to carry out a formation fly-by with all the teams involved, I am not sure if this was practiced or how well the briefing was carried out, but

the fly-by took place at about 300' and seemed to go well, until one team applied smoke if effect right into the path of the following teams, not a great example of airmanship, fortunately with no consequences.

In general, this was an interesting exercise, with hopefully a great future, the regulations need fine tuning, but were a great start, and discipline needs to be maintained throughout, with no ad hoc occurrences.

John Gaillard
Chief Safety Officer (normally Chief Judge)