



Chief Judge

Guidance Notes

Some friendly advice from Nick Buckenham, international judge and President of CIVA, based on an original document by former international judge, Graham Hill.

Purpose

These notes are intended as a brief introduction to the duties and responsibilities of the Chief Judge. Please use the **British Aerobatics Operations Manual** as your primary guide.

The role of the Chief Judge

British Aerobatics nominates a Chief Judge to manage the judging panel at every aerobatic contest. Chief Judges are selected based on experience and ability. They are expected to oversee all official matters relating to the conduct and performance of the judging team (judges, assistants, and scribes) and the judging of sequence flights throughout the event. This should be in accordance with the British Aerobatic **General Rules** and/or **CIVA Section 6 Part 1 (Power) or 2 (Glider)**, where these are appropriate.

The Chief Judge must also work closely with the Contest Director to ensure that, in all matters relating to sequence flight judging, the required standards are met and pilots can be assured that their marks and penalties are recorded in a fair and transparently correct manner.

Where to find the Rules

The General Rules are to be found on the website www.aerobatics.org.uk in the **Briefing Room** under **Rules & Documents**. The current FAI/CIVA Sporting Code for Powered (Part-1) and Glider Aircraft Regulations (Part-2) also provide the descriptive material you will need (<https://civa-news.com/page/the-civa-document-store> under **Regulations for the Conduct of International Aerobatic Events**). A recent copy of the Aresti catalogue or online access to

the OpenAero system will be useful to resolve questions about the sequence figures. If an Unknown or Free Unknown sequence is to be created at the event these are vital tools.

What you are responsible for

Whilst the CD carries the overall responsibility for all matters related to the operation of the contest, the CJ is responsible to him for the presence and conduct of the judges, the standard of their output, and the quality and timely return of all judging paperwork to the scorer.

Additionally if a cautionary or disciplinary matter arises relating to the airborne conduct of a pilot, or a pilot submits an official protest that must be settled, then the CJ is required either to assist the CD in resolving the matter, or having spoken to the CD should settle the matter directly with the pilot. Such incidents should also be reported to the Head of Contest Organisation (HCO) or the Chairman after the contest is concluded.

Checks before arrival

- Are enough **judges and assistants** with appropriate experience planning to attend the event? Check with the Judging Co-ordinator to see who has volunteered. You may have different conditions for a Club event (often on a Friday; fewer judges required) compared to higher level classes on the Saturday and Sunday. Make a list/timetable if necessary. A record of contact mobile telephone numbers can be very useful, as is setting up a WhatsApp group or similar.
- Is your set of General Rules and Aresti reference material up to date? Last years' pages just will not do, and it is all freely available on the internet, so there is no excuse.
- Have you got appropriate clothing to meet the forecast conditions; boots for muddy fields, extra layers for warmth, sunblock and sunglasses etc.? Deck chairs, tables ... ?
- Contact the CD to check whether he has any specific instructions for the event.
- Your own assistant throughout the event is a key post – if you can select/nominate someone you know to be capable in this job the task will be much easier.
- It is highly preferable to have someone separately dedicated to handling all of the judging-line safety radio calls. This frees your attention for other more important things, and considerably improves local traffic awareness and subsequent radio discipline. If not you will need to handle this between you and your assistant.

On arrival

- Check with the CD to bring yourself up to date with all local circumstances. The likely start time of the first sequence is very important; it sets the target for your initial efforts.
- You will need to know exactly where the competition box is and whether there are any areas around the box which might require policing via radio contact with contestants, where the judges may be positioned and how to get there – will it be across the airfield? Will Hi-Viz jackets be required? Is it muddy there? Are there toilet facilities?
- Find out the current weather situation – you will need this information to settle the official box wind direction and strength and to finalise where the judges will be situated when you do your bit in the main briefing.
- Check that all of your judges are en-route or have arrived.
- Try to assess whether there will be enough assistants/scribes, and make sure that 'free' people (pilots' partners, hangers-on, interested local club people) are aware that their time and effort would be much appreciated on the judging line during the contest.
- Get in touch with the scorer, and resolve/agree any requirements for the contest paperwork. The set-up of the contest file to handle FairPlay correctly is important – for domestic events this should normally be for a scoring CJ who submits a Form-A and a Flight Summary Sheet for every flight indicating CHZ, penalties awarded etc. If you want to be a non-scoring judge (do you have enough judges?) this can be arranged by the scorer.

Your contribution to Pilots Briefings

The Contest Director will probably ask you to handle:

- Presentation of the Judges and Assistants to the Pilots – this is important internal PR.
- Description of the Performance Zone, ground markings (if any) and prominent features.
- The official contest wind, the main contest axis/direction and the location of the judges.
- Likely morning and afternoon changes to the above to cope with the position of the sun.
- The permitted safety manoeuvres in each class.
- The permitted minimum and disqualification heights.
- Cloud base – current and continuing, and weather-break options that will be in force.

- Radio safety frequency handling by the judging line – how you will be controlling box entry and exit procedures; allowed query/response pilot updates regarding current circumstances; use of **Box-Box-Box**, **Break-Break-Break**, and **Land-Land-Land** instructions.
- How you will handle delays caused by judging line conferences?
- Will you need a 'box flight' to show the minimum and disqualification altitudes? Instruct the first pilot to fly at each level regardless, so that they know if this is required or not.
- Instruct your judges where to assemble immediately after the briefing, or they will all wander off and be quite hard to locate and assemble in time for the first flight.

After 1st briefing

This is usually a very pressured period – be ready! Now you must begin to manage your judging team, so being assertive and a leader at this stage will bring valuable benefits throughout the event. Lose the initiative here, and you will find the ground hard to make up.

- Get your judges and assistants together – do NOT let them wander away. This will probably require some firm instructions! Judges who 'drift off' may be telling you how they will behave for the rest of the day.
- Make sure that all judges have assistants – some quick words with the CD will help enormously to boost the numbers here. If necessary, he/she can ask pilots to help.
- Make sure that your team has enough chairs, umbrellas and equipment to do the job.
- If the judging line is further than a few minutes' walk away or can only be reached by crossing the airfield, get some transport organised. The judges will have their own vehicles, and the CD may be able to help here. You may need other permissions to access judging sites on or off the airfield and you should be ready to communicate via VHF radio with the air traffic services if their permission is required.
- Collect the radios and spare batteries and your Chief Judge mobile telephone from the scoring office, and any other hardware necessary for your job.
- Ask your assistant to get the judging clipboards together, and to ensure that the CJ's box of paperwork handling equipment has the necessary things in it – stapler, rubber bands, post-it notes, coloured pens, stop-watch, whistle, spare paper for notes.
- Lead your team to the judging site well before the start time.

Before sequence flying starts

You now have the opportunity to get everyone together and set the tone for the day. Have an impromptu light-hearted quiz – ask around to see that the Perception Zero and Hard Zero rules are properly understood; what to do when figures are entirely missed from a flight; how to handle major errors; what judges must do when marking the figures to arrive at the right positioning mark after the flight. Ensure that they understand the need to respond immediately to your calls for a post-flight conference.

Get them to space their positions suitably apart – there may not be much room, and many other considerations can render the result far from perfect. The officially required judge separation is 15m, but far less than this will help you to keep in touch between each flight. You might prefer to have less experienced judges nearer to you. In all these matters just tell them what you need to see – **you** are in charge.

Managing judging team standards

All aerobic judging involves the recording of scores based on opinions drawn from fleeting views of technically complex events by people with widely differing skill sets, and you will undoubtedly see differences of opinion between your judges. It is a good idea to be assertive during the initial flights; get all the judges together in a circle a few times, compare any marks of zero and ask them why they gave them. These are key opportunities to delve into the judging rules and clarify all sorts of misunderstandings, areas that are poorly understood, and reinforce basic aspects of their responsibilities. Be kind if judges make silly mistakes, they will learn better if they are given the space and dignity to recover from their errors. These situations occur all the way to international unlimited judging, and the best management skills always pay the best dividends.

Flight Safety and Pilot control

As Chief Judge you are responsible for maintaining awareness of the position of each contestant from the moment of take-off until the sequence is completed and the aeroplane departs from the box. Either personally or through your appointed Radio Operator you must use the allotted Safety Frequency to make appropriate calls to assist in the safety of each flight. Apart from advising pilots that the box is available, or perhaps advising them to stay clear if the previous pilot has not yet finished, three potentially dangerous situations will require rapid and clear RT instruction from you:

- The contestant's aeroplane enters strays from the box area:
Call "**Box! Box! Box!**" and when the pilot has recovered the aeroplane to erect flight give suitable advice regarding the re-positioning required.
- **A non-contest aeroplane flies towards or into the box:**
Call "**Break! Break! Break!**" then advise the pilot regarding the location and track of the conflicting traffic as soon as possible. This call may also be given if the contestant's flight becomes unacceptably **low** and in your view a break for re-positioning is necessary.
- **The contestant's aeroplane has a problem you can see:**
Call "**Land! Land! Land!**" and when the pilot has recovered the aeroplane to erect flight give brief details if requested regarding the nature and extent of the suspected problem. This call also applies if you feel the flight has become dangerous and should be aborted, but in this case no explanation should be given until the pilot is on the ground.

Pilot discipline

From time to time a pilot will transgress some area of the rules, for instance by low or dangerous flying, disregarding some explicit CD or CJ instruction, or poor airmanship. It is important that these events are handled discreetly but in a forthright manner, usually by asking the pilot concerned to attend a private meeting – possibly with the CD in attendance – so that the incident can be discussed in sufficient detail to arrive at an appropriate conclusion.

- If the pilot is absolved of any wrongdoing or the incident is explained without the need for discipline and the pilot remains active at the event, keeping the discussion private and avoid unnecessary embarrassment or humiliation.
- It may be simply that some common sense observations should be firmly given, but occasionally a more serious misdemeanour must be aired and resolved. The latter may necessarily lead to disqualification of the pilot from the sequence or even the whole event, in which case giving him/her time to fully answer your allegations is essential.
- Make sure that the CD is kept fully advised, and also that the HCO or the Chairman get a thorough explanation – preferably written – after the event.

Do not let your judges change their marks

The current FairPlay scoring system requires judges to **leave marks unchanged**, even when there has been a post-flight discussion and clearly some judges have made the 'wrong decision'. The CJ is however allowed to change selected PZ's to HZ's under specific circumstances (see **CIVA Section 6 Part 1 - 5.3.4.2**). Making sure that your judges leave 'errors' unchanged will help them to remember the occasion and will serve to reinforce their own understanding of the 'correct' solution.

Zeros and Averages

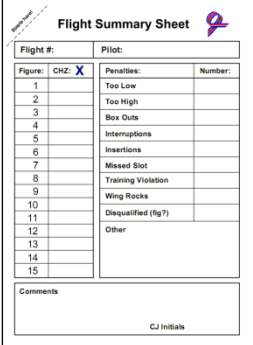
When to use the Perception Zero (PZ) and when to use the Hard Zero (HZ)? This is an important area, and when differences between judges arise, you will need to go over the fundamental rules each time to get them understood. In circumstances where a judge is uncertain about any key aspect of a figure then he/she should always be encouraged to give a score of Average (A). This is the **right** solution!

The Positioning mark

We now teach simple and practical methods for assessing the positioning mark, and if possible you should run through each judge's own system at some stage during the early part of the day to check that the rules are being correctly applied.

Collate and check all Form-A's after every flight, and decide the official CHZ's

We strongly urge you to get your assistant to collect all judges' sheets after every flight. This is not a difficult task and timely paperwork collection forms the basis for your next essential duty: completing the **Flight Summary Sheet (FSS)** on which you must record Confirmed Hard Zero's (CHZ) where necessary.



The image shows a 'Flight Summary Sheet' form. It has a header with 'Flight #' and 'Pilot:'. Below this is a table with columns for 'Figure', 'CHZ', 'Penalties', and 'Number:'. The 'Figure' column lists numbers 1 through 15. The 'CHZ' column has an 'X' in the row for figure 1. The 'Penalties' column lists various categories: Too Low, Too High, Box Out, Interruptions, Insertions, Missed Slot, Training Violation, Wing Rocks, and Disqualified (fig7). The 'Number:' column is empty. Below the table is a 'Comments' section and a space for 'CJ Initials'.

Get your assistant to staple the sheets together in judge number order with a blank Flight Summary Sheet at the top.

Be clearly aware that you as Chief Judge **must** complete the **Flight Summary Sheet** that records the CHZ's that drive the FairPlay system to set a figure to 'all HZ' or not – the old 'majority rules' approach went out years ago. Check through your Judges Form-A's for HZ's, Low's etc. to get a good feel for their views. If there is disagreement about HZ's you must quickly talk to the minority 'dissenters' or get them all together for a quick chat so that an all-Judges solution is agreed. Do not leave this too long – memories and time are short. Mark the

relevant figures as CHZ, or leave the column blank where the figure is OK, and add any agreed penalties. Finally – initial the sheet to show that you have signed it off to be sent to the scorer. The scorer uses ONLY this sheet to drive these inputs, not the Form-A's.

When the scorer's runner collects the sets of paperwork they *must* be stapled together in sets as above. This will ensure

- a) that all the sheets are there (you did check, didn't you!) and
- b) that they are in the right order for swift computer entry.

Video

At major contests we sometimes video-record all flights to help judges determine the 'correct' resolution to disagreements about HZ decisions. The video should be available to any judge who asks for it. It is there to resolve matters of fact HZ' and not PZ's – these are matters of perception. *Note that a Judge may **not** give an "A" (average) and then ask to see the video!*

Post-sequence judging analysis sheets

The ACRO contest scoring system can easily provide analysis sheets for each judge when the sequence is finished and another sheet that collates the essential details together for the CJ. Used carefully these sheets can show where a judge may be giving marks that differ significantly from the other judges. They do require personal explanation, however, so don't give them out without some personal time to explain what it all means and to answer any queries.

Protests

The General Rules provide the basis for pilots' protests which fortunately are extremely rare. The CD will formally handle any protests submitted and of course where the subject matter involves a query relating to a judging line decision then the CJ's advice will be sought. Strict adherence to the current General Rules is paramount in these events, but where there is any doubt the decision should always be in the pilots' best interest.

Post event reporting

It is important that incidents and safety matters which arise during a contest or event are reported so that lessons can be learned, and procedures improved. A short report to the HCO

or the Chairman detailing any reports or observations should be made at the end of the contest.

And finally!

Always remember that the good conduct of British Aerobatics officials provides the foundation for excellence in all aspects of our events. You are on show, whether you like it or not. You are also there because you earned the position, so enjoy the privilege, and try to turn in the best performance that you can. Remember, if you are not completely confident for your first event as Chief Judge you can always arrange to have an experienced mentor work with you while you learn.

Enjoy!

Revised – April 2020