

Judges wanted!

At any accuracy competition there are three very important groups of people:

- The competitors, without whom there would be no competition
- The officials, without whom there would also be no competition
- The helpers, without whom the first two categories of people would soon become extremely fed up.

Non-flying family members and pilots who are too inexperienced to fly in the competition, or who have retired from competitive flying, usually make up the helpers group. Some may wish to be involved in a more official (although not necessarily more useful) capacity. Although non-fliers or inexperienced pilots are not eligible for official roles such as launch marshal or winch operator, most people can be trained to be judges in a relatively short time. Non-flying family members can find it increases their involvement in and enjoyment of the sport, while pilots who are judging are in a prime position to observe and learn from the target approaches of others while deepening their knowledge of the rules.

Although competitors in a paragliding accuracy competition are not permitted to act as officials, at classic accuracy competitions, where return to launch for the next flight can be accomplished in minutes, competitors who take on official roles between flights are crucial to the smooth running of the event.

Over the last few years, largely as a response to the increasing number of countries involved in accuracy and the need for consistency in judging, training for paragliding accuracy judges has become formalised and progression from local to international level is possible. This may seem daunting, but everyone has to start somewhere and even the most inexperienced person can quickly become a useful member of the team.

Age or youth can both be accommodated as the target area provides some sedentary roles (recorder or wind-speed monitor). The regular competition team currently includes several young people, some trained in certain roles to national or international level at an age when they are still not able to enter the competitions they judge at. Although the rules differ in some respects, the judging team at a classic accuracy competition operates in the same way as in paragliding accuracy, so skills are easily transferred between hillside and airfield.

Training for a role on the judging team involves several simple steps. First the target layout and roles of the different judges are explained, usually by the event judge. Some familiarity with the rules and the target area from watching competitions is an advantage but not essential. Then the trainee judge will shadow an experienced judge, exchanging places with them when they are ready and being supported by them until the chief and event judges are happy that they can continue on their own. Some trainee judges start with the roles of recorder or wind-speed monitor; more active people may prefer to begin as a strike judge.

The job of recorder is very straightforward; it involves confirming and recording the score that is called, ensuring that the pilot signs for it (unless a relaunch is requested), and noting start and finish times for rounds or stand-downs. The wind-speed

Teamwork at the target PHOTO: LIZ LAWRENCE



monitor has the task of observing the wind speeds and informing the event judge if the wind exceeds the competition limits during the final 30 seconds of the flight. These two officials are positioned outside the measuring field (the target circles on the ground), usually at a table. The front and back strike judges stand just outside the measuring field, upwind and downwind, where they can observe and signal which part of the pilot makes contact with the ground. There is an agreed system of five hand signals which are easy to learn. Pilots may employ other hand signals but these do not form part of any official repertoire.

From these roles judges can then progress to fichet judge, positioned closer to the electronic pad. These three judges observe and mark the position of the first point of contact, triangulating for accuracy. If you see a target with four fichet judges someone is probably being trained. One member of the team also calls the score to the recorder - a job where having a loud voice is an advantage! All training and roles undertaken are recorded in a judging logbook which you will be given. This can be shown to the chief judge at other competitions, including those abroad, to confirm your experience and eligibility to join their team. In time you may also progress to event judge or even become qualified to be chief judge in a competition.

At some smaller competitions you may see a reduced judging team. Technically a full crew, as described above, is only required for FAI Category 1 and 2 competitions and national and international classic accuracy events. In practice, whatever the level of competition, everyone's job is easier if there are enough judges for people not to have to double-up on roles, plus a few spares so that tired and hungry judges can take a break. At these smaller competitions, where qualified judges may be in short supply and experience is less important, volunteers will be particularly welcome. However, even at larger competitions, it is usually possible to train new judges without interfering with the smooth running of the target.

This is only a brief summary of what judging involves; more detail can be found in the judging section of the FAI Sporting Code, Section 7C. Of course what that doesn't mention are the reasons why most of us become judges. For some it is the

chance to acquire knowledge which may make the better competition pilots; others want to make a contribution to the sport which does not involve hurtling off a hillside. There is no doubt in my mind that, at any competition, the target is the place to be in the thick of the action with all the camaraderie that comes from working in a team. Yes, the pilots are sometimes stroppy and your judgements will not always be appreciated (but some pilots do say thank you); of course there are dull periods of inaction followed by flurries of activity the minute you think about dashing off for a visit to the loo, but we always welcome new faces on the target and your contribution will be appreciated, even by those who forget to show it.

REPORT BY LIZ LAWRENCE

2008 Classic Accuracy League

Following a review of the 2007 Classic Accuracy League trial where the League covered the two most recent years of competitions, the Accuracy Panel has decided to revert back to the original system where only the most recent year's competitions count towards the League. The main reasons for the change were that a pilot's positions could be influenced by past rather than current performance, and the original concerns about a reduced number of competitions have not occurred

For the 2008 and subsequent years' Leagues, the best points scores from three out of four or more valid League competitions will count to the League. If there are only three valid League competitions, best point scores from two competitions will count.

The League competitions eligible for points in 2008 are the three Grand Prix competitions (France, UK and Holland), Horst and Birdwings.

League points are awarded at each competition such that top placed British pilot gets points equivalent to the number of Brits in the competition with a maximum limit of 30. Second place gets one less point, etc. In the event of a tie for any position at the end of a season, the total target scores obtained by the tied pilots in the competitions at which they all competed will be calculated. The pilot with the lowest total score will be awarded the highest position.