

The view from the target

LIZ LAWRENCE, ACCURACY PANEL RULES OFFICER, OUTLINES THE TASK OF JUDGING

Poised in your peripheral vision, motionless as you complete your final approach, springing into action as you land, the end of your competition accuracy flight is observed, signalled, marked and, where necessary, measured by the judges. You may remember to thank them (always appreciated); elated at your score you may smile at them; disappointed you may ignore or even argue with them. But, apart from those brief moments of landing, what have they got to do with you? You belong in the air and they are earthbound, scanning the sky for the next approaching competitor.



Photo: Arthur Bentley

Judges measuring at the French Grand Prix target

Like any competitive sport, paragliding accuracy needs its officials; without them the circuit of Category 1 and 2 competitions, club events and training competitions would not be possible. But the majority of you readers will be pilots, and a role that keeps your feet on the ground is not uppermost in your mind. So where can we find the new judges that we need to keep our target areas smooth running and fully staffed?

Our current register of judges includes beginner and non-competing pilots, partners, other family members and friends of pilots, young people not yet old enough to start their own accuracy flying careers, and interested people who want involvement in their local club without actually flying. Some of you will fit into one of those categories; many of you will know other people who do and who you could share this article with. All you or they need to start is enthusiasm, willingness to learn and integrity, and to be observant and able to work in a team.

My initial involvement in judging was through classic accuracy, back in the distant past when it was parascending accuracy and paragliders and targets hadn't been introduced to each other. In classic accuracy the pool of judges is larger because, with no long drive up to launch, trained pilots can be rotated into the target crew alongside the full-time officials.

I soon learned that the target was a sociable place between landings, and that the judging viewpoint was ideal for observing the skills of accuracy and learning what to do – and what not to do! As the gradient of my own accuracy learning curve flattened my enthusiasm for judging grew, until I gradually morphed from a pilot who judges into a judge who sometimes competes.

The first steps in classic accuracy judging are relatively straightforward. If you are not familiar with judging, spend a bit of time at the target observing, then receive some

instruction from an experienced judge and shadow the judging roles until you and your trainer are confident that you can take your place in the team. You will need BHPA membership – non-flying membership is fine if you are not a pilot, and temporary membership can be arranged by competition organisers for you to try it out.

New judges may start by recording scores, measuring the wind or as strike judges, observing and indicating the first point of contact, progressing to ficht judges – close in, marking and measuring the landing point. With experience and greater knowledge of the rules you may want to take on the role of Event or Chief Judge, the senior officials setting up, leading and managing the target area.

Paragliding accuracy has similar roles but different rules. Although, as a consequence, there are some differences in the way the roles are carried out, many UK judges work



Photo: Liz Lawrence

Homing in on the first point of contact at the 2019 UK Paragliding Accuracy Nationals

across both disciplines. If your introduction to this type of judging is in a club or training environment it may be a very similar induction to that of a classic accuracy judge – a short explanation followed by shadowing and mentoring. But to progress to involvement in FAI competitions you will need to take part in an official national training seminar, run in conjunction with a Category 2 competition and involving both theory and practical sessions. Successful completion of this will enable you to judge at Category 2 competitions in the UK and overseas.

Judging may not be for everyone, but for the UK competition scene to thrive we need to find all those people who are suited to the role and get them involved. There can be no competitions without judges to observe, mark and measure the performance of the competitors, ensuring that the rules are followed and that competition results are fair and valid.

Although social distancing rules currently present challenges, both for organising competitions and surrounding the target with a full judging crew, anyone who wants to try judging can still register their interest and read up on the rules. The BHPA Accuracy Panel website <http://bhpa-accuracy.org.uk> has a page all about judging. Here you can find links to the FAI Sporting Code Section 7C, with the rules for paragliding accuracy and the judging code, and to the classic accuracy rule and separate classic accuracy judging code. You can also indicate your interest or find out more by emailing accuracy@bhpa.co.uk.

Judging can be at times exciting, frustrating (especially when the conditions are marginal), sociable and tiring, but it always puts you at the heart of the action in a vital role. I hope to see you (or someone you know) getting involved on a target near you in the not-too-distant future.

Thermal UK flying

We are again focusing on the month for a Thermal Chasers year we have a team of coaches on board. We'll be working with schools to offer a Thermal programme tailored to an requirements. We offer it paragliding and paramotoring applications



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