

F2D News - February 2008

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Hello people. I'm back again with more F2D news for your edification and reading pleasure. With winter here, there's not a lot of combat activity going on in this part of the country. That does not mean, however, that there is nothing to discuss.

This week I received an email from our Kiwi correspondent Bryce Gibson pointing me to the recently posted agenda for the CIAM's plenary meeting. The meeting will take place this March in Lausanne, Switzerland. First off, you can be assured that this means it will definitely start on time (so don't plan to be "fashionably late!"). If you're not planning on attending the meeting, I'm sure its timeliness doesn't concern you; however, what will happen there should concern you.

The agenda for the meeting is available for public viewing on the FAI website: <http://www.fai.org/aeromodelling/meetings/200803>. To save you some time, the relevant bits for us start at page 18. This is where all of the rules proposals that will be up for discussion are listed. The fate of these proposals will shape the future of our event, so I suggest that you go there to read and digest them. Once you have done that, you will be free to jump to conclusions and to flood the internet with blog posts, yahoo messages, etc.

There are many proposals up for discussion at the upcoming meeting, and I don't feel it's my place to go through them one by one or to tell you how to think about them. Many of the proposals sound very reasonable, and in some cases are simply meant to codify certain interpretations that have already been enforced for a long time. Other proposals suggest more drastic shifts in practice that should be considered carefully.

We've discussed shut-offs at several points in the past, and I don't want to get back into the specifics of that topic this month. You should note, however, that several rules related to the upcoming introduction of shut-offs are scheduled to be discussed at the meeting. It's definitely worth reading those carefully and trying to imagine exactly how they will play out in a contest setting. The rules are still intentionally vague about the nature of the shut-off device. We need some serious development on the hardware to get something working by January 2009!

One proposal to which I would like to bring particular attention is the proposal by Russia to ammend section 4.4.16 regarding the matching of contestants at the World Championships. As it stands currently, the returning World Champion enters the competition as an independent entity. His score does not count toward the team prize for his home country, and he is not separated from his compatriots in the draw. In the proposed change, however, the rule would read:

"Previous opponents and competitors of the same nationality shall be drawn apart if possible with competitors of the same nationality to fly against each other only if there are no remaining opponents. Defending champions, not members of their national team, shall be drawn apart with their team members in just the same way, as if they were members of their national team."

The supplied justification for this change is that it would eliminate pressure from the team upon the returning champion to throw matches for the benefit of the team prize. At the same time, however, this means that the home country of the returning champion starts with an advantage over other countries by not having its pilots matched against a very strong opponent.

The other proposal that I want to discuss is a proposed change to section 4.4.4, which defines the F2D competitor. Up to now, the competitor has always been defined as the pilot. Mechanics were viewed on a lower footing, as essentially employees of the pilot. In recognition of the importance of mechanics to the pilot's success, Russia has proposed redefining the competitor as a "crew consisting of one pilot and one mechanic." This two-person "entrant" would then be allowed one "helper" to complete the team in each match.

In terms of running contests and executing matches, this redefinition changes nothing. However, there

are some interesting logistical and philosophical issues that it raises.

On the one hand, it would be very nice for mechanics to receive more recognition for their hard work and their roles in the triumphs of champions. If more recognition for mechanics were the only result of the change, there would be little reason to discuss it further. However, it is possible that this change could further exacerbate the problems already faced by smaller countries where it may be difficult to even field a complete team. As it currently stands, pilots from small countries have a difficult time at the World Championships due to the fact that mechanics are only allowed to work for pilots from a single country throughout the entire competition. This prohibits mechanics from helping their friends from other countries, even if they have sufficient time, energy, etc.

At any other competition, we have a very close community and mechanics roam freely from pilot to pilot helping whoever is in need. This causes no problems with conflict of interest, and allows pilots who are not fortunate enough to have a whole crew of countrymen present to compete on even footing with everyone else. At the World Championships, however, such pilots are forced to find full-time recruits from other countries. In the interest of promoting the sport, especially in smaller countries or countries where there is not yet a great interest in F2D, I think it would be helpful to relax these restrictions.

These issues I mention are not directly related to the proposed redefinition of the competitor. However, such changes will surely affect pilots from smaller countries. One possible issue is that the cost of paying the full entry fee for each pilot and mechanic will be too expensive for some poorer countries. Money aside, the issue of finding a dedicated mechanic is not changed much. If the rule is passed, however, I would hope that the allowed “helper” (third crew member) would at least *not* be country-restricted. It’s a complicated issue that should definitely be given some thought.

Anyway, the point of this was not to give you a reading assignment or to tell you how to think. The point was to drop some new information on you, and to encourage you to think about it, to discuss it, and to send your input to your country’s CIAM representative. Ultimately, these representatives are the ones who will vote on the proposals, and the best way to achieve a favorable outcome is to keep them involved in the discussion. Happy reading and good luck!