

F2D News - April 2006

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A few things have happened since the last installment of the F2D News. In this issue I'll follow up on some things that I talked about in the past two months.

First off, the CIAM Plenary Meeting took place on March 24 and 25 in Switzerland. The issue of safety in F2D was up for discussion, and many of us were worried about the possibility of a rash decision by the committee to institute new rules that would take effect before the World Championships this summer. The good news is that no such action has been taken. It is my understanding that the World Championships will be conducted according to what is written in the current 2006 version of the Sporting Code. In the interest of safety, I hope that the organizers in Spain will lay out the field with ample distance from the circle to the spectator area, and employ some safety netting if possible.

While I am glad that no rash decisions were made, it is clear that this is more of a beginning than an end to this matter. By way of Dave Lovgren in Canada, I've heard that the committee is still very concerned about safety and really wants to see that we, the F2D community, are making progress towards reducing the risk associated with flyaways.

Because the CIAM subcommittee is the group with control over the entire nature of our event, it is in our best interest to try to educate them about the details of our sport and to work with them on finding a solution that is acceptable to everyone. The F2D jury members – Guido Michiels, Rob Olijve, Vernon Hunt, Pavol Barbaric, and Ingemar Larsson – set a great precedent in this direction already by circulating a questionnaire to gather information and opinions from F2D pilots around the world, and presenting their findings to the F2 Subcommittee. For those who are interested, the original questionnaire and a summary of their results are available on Goran Olsson's webpage www.go-cl.se/cl.html.

Now that the urgency has subsided, we can begin to think about the long-term. Although flyaways will never be completely eliminated, shutoffs do appear to be one of the best ways of minimizing their risk. Many people have voiced support for shutoffs, and many have voiced concerns. Some of those concerns are fairly serious, and will have to be addressed as we work towards a solution. The F2D community is full of many very bright and clever individuals; I am confident that we will be able to come up with a low-cost solution that will improve the safety and ensure the longevity of our sport for years to come.

In other news, the first big F2D competition of the year took place last month in Phoenix, Arizona. It was a great competition, with a field of many of the country's top pilots in attendance. Your faithful reporter didn't make it to the podium this time, but the top finishers were 1) Mike Willcox, 2) Darin Albert, 3) Chris Renton.

As an experiment to try out one of the proposed safety-related changes to the F2D rules, the contest organizers marked the field with a pilot's circle of reduced size (2 feet smaller in diameter). It was a well-intentioned move, which on the bright side gave us the chance to experience this situation without it being legislated as a permanent law. Most of the pilots who I talked to didn't have a particularly favorable reaction to the smaller circle. Although one cannot really infer much about the effect of changing the circle diameter on flyaways from a single event, we were able to get a taste of how a smaller circle would feel.

I'm sure there are varying opinions on this, but to me the smaller circle felt a bit constricted and seemed to limit movement considerably. As this part of the sport's dynamic is something that I enjoy very much (and that I don't believe is a major source of flyaways), I'm not in favor of such changes being implemented in the future. One thing that we should do, however, is begin to keep track of flyaways and amass some data about their frequency and causes. Such information will be invaluable as we continue to work with the CIAM to protect our sport and our spectators.