

F6 / Media report

Guy Revel

Year 2013 began with two major events scheduled, in which FAI had planned F6 AeroMusicals to be flown : the SportAccord World Artistic Games for which 24 pilots had already been chosen earlier through selection contests and the World Games where AeroMusicals was to be a demonstration sport for up to 6 invited pilots.

As it goes, the World Artistic Games are still in question with no date set while the World Games took place as planned.

The World Artistic Games

A couple of years ago SportAccord, the umbrella organisation for international sports federations, devised a new line of high-level, multi-sports competitive events openly aimed at promoting lesser-known sports. World Combat Games and World Mind Games have already been successfully launched. The World Artistic Games are to include a number of various indoor sports (cycling, swimming, gymnastic etc.) on a common theme.

One of the declared aims is to benefit from the synergy with common means to reach the “critical mass” able to attract spectators and Media and, ultimately, sponsors as most of the relevant sports federations, left alone, strive for money to achieve even the most basic promotional actions.

At this date, nothing is set as regards the first World Artistic Games, but it seems – and the recent experience with the World Games tend to prove it – that it would be hugely profitable for CIAM aeromodelling as a sport to explore the path of joint competitive events with other sports – be they air sports or not – having related aspects.

The World Games

The World Games are the World's largest multi-sports event after the Olympic Games, featuring roughly 35 different sports and over 4,000 competitors coming, this year, from 120 different countries. The World Games include only non-olympic sports with the aim to showcase them and provide increased visibility. Actually the World Games are also the first step for a sport to access olympic status, as the present IOC rules state that for a sport to be included in the olympic schedule, it must first show its worth at the World Games.

AeroMusicals is the official name for the F6B competition class (indoor freestyle aerobatics to music). Following the success of this class at the World Air Games, FAI decided to submit it as a demonstration event at the World Games 2013 in Cali, Colombia where two other FAI sports, canopy piloting (parachuting) and paragliding accuracy, were already scheduled.

Following a late agreement on the practical elements of this demonstration, FAI invited two high-level AeroMusicals pilots who were to perform flights in front of the paying spectators of other sports sharing the same hall : Ju-Jitsu and Wushu/kung-fu.

Different environment

The flight demonstrations were made in the same way as normal competition flights and scheduled as opening and closing events surrounding the official sport's actual competition. They proved hugely successful. While spectators and media were not informed about these AeroMusicals flights before coming in, the spectators' reactions during and after the flights were, to say the least, phenomenal and always asking for more. Even more satisfying was that we received an incredible amount of TV and newspapers interview requests, both live and recorded.

Further, it appeared very clearly once again to what extent a running commentary is a mandatory support, keeping spectators informed about what happens, providing all the answers to the "hows" and "whys" and keeping everybody on their toes in the intervals devoid of real action.

I must underline that our sport was always referred to as "AeroMusicals" and that "model", "model aircraft", "aeromodelling" and similar terms were never used from our side, never mentioned in return and the flights were clearly understood as a sporting event. The two pilots, Alan Goljevscek from Slovenia and Andres Leoni from Spain produced a superb performance, both through their flights and as our sport's ambassadors through their relation with World Games and federations officials, fellow competitors from other sports, spectators and Media. They should be commended for their communication and promotion action of the highest level on behalf of FAI and CIAM. Having AeroMusicals included as an official sport at the World Games 2017 in Wroclaw, Poland, would be a huge achievement.

World Air Games

It is understood that World Air Games are to take place in 2015. AeroMusicals, Artistic Aerobatics as well as Hand Thrown Gliders are on the official list of submitted sports to WAG bidders. Preparation will go forward as soon as details of date, location and schedule will be known.

World Championships

An ongoing discussion within CIAM centers on the reduction of the number of World Championships. This is not a Media matter and I will not go into it. However, from a Media point of view, there are other important points mainly centered around championships attractiveness, costs and sporting value.

The present World Championships basic structure remained unchanged for the last 60 years and appears archaic in view of the deep changes in everyday life, economics and sports perception during the last half century. A World Championship should be the epitome of high-level sport and, as such, display a concentrate of the highest level of performance to effectively promote the class. It should also be supported by non-competitors who are – in most cases – effectively paying for the champions to attend the World Championships.

A study of other sports enjoying better public perception highlights general trends :

- Short duration

Many World championships last a mere two or three days, never more than a week. Only high-image sports, usually team sports, last longer.

- Preliminary selection, reduced participation

With aeromodelling classes, any NAC may enter a team of 3, irrespective of the actual competitive level of the team members. With most sports there are no fixed-number national teams but a minimum performance achievement to access a World Championship and/or a maximum number of entries. This ensures a homogeneous level of performance during the World Championship itself as well as a limited number of competitors, thus reducing organising costs as well as the event duration and improving attractiveness.

Such a preliminary selection system may take various forms according to the competition class. For instance a World ranking system could be used for some classes while an absolute performance value may be best for other classes. Another option would be a two step system, using continental championships as a selection event for world championships. This would enhance the status of continental championships and may be applicable for individual results or alternately for national team results if the present system of national teams is kept.

- Continuous selection throughout the championship

With most sports a world championship is made of a series of successive eliminations, progressively reducing the number of competitors up to a final climax whereas, in most CIAM championship classes, the bulk of the championship time span is made of repetitive events devoid of clear indications about the standings at any time. Semi-finals and finals, as with a few classes, are not enough when they come after long days of flying by all the entrants. This does not contribute to proper promotion of our sport and competition classes. To promote a sport, it must be made attractive to outsiders and only a handful of CIAM classes achieve this. One such example is control line team racing where the race element is clearly understood and every race has a winner.

Finally, the terms "model" , "modelling" etc. carry an extremely negative image. Due to the widely different forms of flying within CIAM, I do not believe a single term could be used to cover all kinds of competitions and it may be wiser to create for each class suitable names able to convey a positive image.

At a time where sports are fighting against other sports to achieve recognition and growth, at a time where new trend sports grab public attention, it is vital that CIAM acts and makes competition classes more attractive to the general public so as to, as a minimum, retain its "market" share and, at best, grow along with the evolution of modern aeromodelling.