



PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

Air sports set to shine at The World Games 2017 in Poland

Wroclaw, Poland, 20 July 2017 – **The World Games 2017 opened in spectacular style in the city of Wroclaw, Poland on Thursday night, 20 July 2017, with an opening ceremony of light, sound and music in front of 35,000 people.**

President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Thomas Bach formally opened the Games from the centre of the stage in a packed Wroclaw stadium. "Athletes, now is your time to shine!" he said to huge applause.

Held under the patronage of the IOC, The World Games are held every four years, but are for sports or disciplines that are not in the Olympic Games. This year the 10th World Games will feature some 4,000 competitors from 100 nations across 60 different sports and disciplines.

Three air sports are represented: Paramotoring, Glider Aerobatics and Canopy Piloting (Swooping).

The air sports athletes joined their colleagues in the opening ceremony, which saw each country's athletes and competitors parade through the stadium behind flag bearers, all set to a stunning sound and light show.

The biggest cheers were reserved for the home nation Team Poland, which saw its scores of athletes parade in red and white to applause from every corner.

After all the athletes had taken their seats, IOC President Thomas Bach officially opened The World Games.

He said: "The next 10 days will be a celebration of the diversity of sport and its values. The World Games are a confirmation of the power of sport to unite all people. In sport, everyone is equal, no matter who you are, or where you come from. Sport brings people together."

Addressing the athletes directly he said: "You are the best ambassadors of your countries. Now it is your time to shine. Make the most of this unique experience. Give it your best, and always remember to believe in the spirit of excellence, respect and fair play. Because being a true champion is about so much more than winning."

This drew the biggest applause and loudest cheers of the night.

Sixty-six pilots and skydivers will be competing for prestigious World Games gold medals in their respective disciplines over the next three days.

The air sports competitions take place from 20-23 July 2017 at Szymanow Airfield in Wroclaw, Poland. Friday, Saturday and Sunday are full competition days, with Monday held over in case of poor weather. All three air sports are based at the airfield, with a big screen and dedicated seating making it accessible to spectators. About 1,000 people are expected to attend on each of the three competition days.

Welcoming the competitors to Wroclaw on Wednesday, 19 July 2017, FAI Secretary General Susanne Schödel laid out the importance of The World Games to the world of air sports. "The World Games are not just a fun competition. They take place under the patronage of the International Olympic Committee and are about showcasing the best side of our sports to the IOC and to the world."

She added: "This is the first time that the FIA has had three air sports represented at The World Games. I wish you happy landings throughout the competition."

The competitors taking part are among the best in their field, with many world champions and world record holders among them.

Paramotoring World Champion Alex Mateos is here, having made the journey from his home in France. "It's my first time in Wroclaw," he said, adding he was looking forward to seeing how the "new tasks with new rules" play out.

"The difference here is that the paramotoring tasks are not over water, so they have been designed to be slower and to involve a lot of precision. I have been training for that, so let's see."

Skydiver Jeannie Bartholomew is taking part in the Canopy Piloting competition. She said: "I was here last year for the test event and it was really well run. I like it when they pick unique cities for competitions. The drop zone here is nice, a big open field and a good pond. I'm looking forward to it!"

Bartholomew is competing alongside her husband Curt, himself a five-time Canopy Piloting World Champion.

Abdulbari Qubaisi is more used to jumping at in the desert dropzones of the United Arab Emirates, where he is a professional skydiver in Dubai. Was he looking forward to the competition? "I am looking forward to winning gold!" he laughed. "Yes, I am looking forward to the competition and showing people what a good sport we have."

He added: "The most important thing has been that the people have been so nice. They have made it very easy, you feel like you are in your own home."

And Glider Aerobatics World Champion Ferenc Toth was also looking forward to it, although he said the three day competition would be tough. "We only have four competition flights, so it will be different to a normal world championship. The rules make the tasks harder to fly, with tougher penalties for mistakes. It's a challenging programme."

He added: "I'm optimistic. [But] all the good pilots are here."

The official programme of events at The World Games, including air sports events, starts on Friday 20 July 2017.

The air sports events at The World Games will be covered on the FAI social media channels – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram – as well as with daily reports on the FAI website.

Where to find out more

The FAI Media Team will be at the World Games in Wroclaw and will be posting news and rights-free photography to these channels

Rights-free photography on Flickr
www.flickr.com/photos/airsports_fai

Social media
www.facebook.com/airsports.fai
www.twitter.com/airsports_fai
www.instagram.com/airsports.fai

The World Games air sports events
<http://twg2017.airsports.aero/>

List of athletes participating in the air sports events
<http://twg2017.airsports.aero/event/athletes>

More about The World Games 2017

The World Games
www.theworldgames.org

Logo
<https://cloud.fai.org/index.php/s/9Ktz4OaDnz3sCjz>

Facts and figures about the World Games (pdf)
www.goo.gl/sZCNUf

The World Games on Facebook (IWGA, the International World Games Association)
www.facebook.com/iwga.theworldgames

About FAI

FAI, the World Air Sports Federation (www.fai.org), is the world governing body for air sports and for certifying world aviation and space records. The FAI was founded in 1905 and is a non-governmental and non-profit-making organisation recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

FAI activities include Aerobatics, Aeromodelling, Airships, Amateur-Built and Experimental Aircraft, Balloons, Drones, Gliding, Hang Gliding, Helicopters, Manpowered Flying, Microlights, Parachuting, Paragliding, Paramotors, Power Flying and all other Aeronautic and Astronautic sporting activities.

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