

JURY REPORT ON 2024 FREE FLIGHT EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS F1A F1B F1C

FAI Jury

Ian Kaynes GBR President

Valentin Saviv BUL Member

Dacian Pustea ROU Member

As noted below Bulletin 3 announced changes of personnel including the Romanian Jury member. At the competition the effect of the staff changes became apparent. The nominated Contest Director spoke no English and the Romanian Jury member was in fact the English-speaking person responsible for on field communications, a contradiction of being an independent Jury member.

Dates

July 22 to 26, 2024

Location

Simeria, Deva, Romania

Information

Bulletin 1 was issued in December 2023. Bulletin 2 with the final entry form was issued in April 2024. Bulletin 3 was prepared in July and distributed just days before the start of the Championships. This included a change of the Romanian member of the jury and also a change of contest director.

Participation

F1A had 84 competitors including 11 females. The competitors included a Junior Champion too old to defend his title in a Junior event. 27 nations were represented.

F1B had 69 competitors including 6 females. 25 nations were represented

F1C had 38 competitors including 2 females. 15 nations were represented.

Accommodation

Some teams were accommodated in the Hotel Sarmis in Deva, which was suitable and notable for serving breakfast from 5.30 on flying days and dinner until 23.00..

Flying site

The flying site at Simeria had not been used for any major events, while major World Cup events have been held on a good site at Salonta. The approach to the Simeria flying field was a long rough track on which a some cars were damaged and it became treacherous when muddy. The field had appeared to be an adequate size on a map but in reality it was surrounded by crops and was close to Simeria and other villages, compounded by the regular flying position being quite close to the populated areas.

Weather

Morning mist was quite common on the site. On F1A day it resulted in a short (10 minute) delay to the start but the rest of the day had dry clear weather. F1B flying was interrupted by storms. On F1C day the start was delayed by significant mist and then rapidly increasing wind. The last two rounds had less wind and the F1C flyoff on the following morning had good weather.

Competition

Model processing and registration were carried out on the field on tables with sunshades. This was carried out according to the schedule despite applying tiny stickers to each component of each model in contradiction of the Sporting Code. Timekeepers were instructed to check these numbers which meant being very close to the model to be able to read them, in contrast to the required 10mm high model identification letters which can be seen from a distance. It was only after processing had been started that a towline check and a scale for rubber checking were made available to competitors.

The team managers meeting was held in a hotel near the flying field on the same day as processing and after the opening ceremony. At the meeting starting pole positions were established by draws of numbered pieces of paper, initially being taken round to each team manager to draw his number, but quickly changed to the jury making the draw. There had been correspondence before the event about the availability of fuel without resolution and at the meeting it was announced that there was only one standard fuel available instead of the two required by the Sporting Code to give a choice of castor oil or synthetic oil as the lubricant. It was confirmed that flying would be stopped by Jury decision in the event of a thunderstorm or lightning. Significant decisions would be considered at meeting of organisers, jury and team managers.

The start of the F1A flying was delayed by 10 minutes because of mist. During round 4 a tractor and then large truck drove along a track which ran through the middle of the start line. This produced a disturbance for flyers at the poles near to the track and the round was extended by 5 minutes to compensate. This, like round start and finish times were announced with a hand-held load-hailer which was not adequate for the length of the line, even when used from the middle of the line. Scoring was handled by a person relaying flight times by phone to control where they were entered on the scoreboard and the computer. The results were communicated to team managers via a Whats App group. They were apparently also posted on online on Facebook but that and the addresses had not been publicised.

The first F1A flyoff was scheduled for 19.30 and it was known that there would still be lift at that time and wind was becoming light so with jury agreement the maximum was increased to 8 minutes to provide a more significant test. Teams were requested to supply an additional timekeeper for the flyoff and, against the Sporting Code, the organisers had told them to help time their own team. This flyoff eliminated only two of the 25 competitors and some models went into the village. The next flyoff was held at 20.45 with a 10 minute maximum. Four flyers achieved this and the next flyoff was set for 6.45 the following morning. This was flown after a short delay for mist to clear and then all models and towlines were checked.

F1B began soon after the F1A flyoff had finished. The first rounds had generally light winds. During round 5 there was thunder and lightning in the hills around the field and in the following round it came much nearer. The organiser dismissed it as still being far away. The UK submitted a protest which was upheld by two jury members and flying was stopped. There was then heavy rain for more than two hours. After it stopped a team managers meeting agreed to continue with the remainder of round 6 and then fly round 7. During the last round there was distant thunder and lightning in the nearby hills and UK submitted another protest. This was rejected as being only in the distance and because at the delayed time the jury received the protest the flying was almost over.

There was time for one flyoff held at 20.30 to the standard 6 minute maximum. The line was efficiently rotated to face the wind and extended to cater for the 37 competitors. This time it was enforced that additional timekeepers would be allocated to flyers of other nationality, however the allocation proved difficult because the result of the draw for flyoff positions was announced only shortly before the start and the line was very long for communicating with timekeepers.

The next F1B flyoff would be held the following morning at 7.00 to a 10 minute maximum with the start of F1C to be delayed to 7.30. However, at that time the field was enveloped in thick mist. It was not until 10.00 that the mist cleared enough for flying to begin. Not being early morning, there was lift present for the F1B flyoff and so that 7 flyers achieved the maximum. One of these was on altimeter evidence and a Czech flyer

had requested an altimeter review, but his model was high in a tree beside a railway line and could not be recovered during the day.

F1C began at 10.30 and the wind increased significantly during the first round. Model retrieval problems were reported and the maximum was reduced from the planned 4 minutes to 3 minutes. It became apparent that the F1C fuel was being distributed in unmarked soft drinks bottles although kept in marked paper bags by the timekeepers. The organisers had disregarded the change to the Sporting Code which stipulates that the fuel containers must be clearly marked with danger labels. Furthermore, the timekeepers appeared to have been instructed to limit the fuel allowed to a competitor to 20 ml, whereas there is no basis for such a limit. Apparently the timekeepers had not been briefed on how to time motor runs and to give the benefit of doubt to competitors when the run could not be determined when multiple engines were running at the time.

The wind had increased through the day and severe model recovery problems were reported. A hold was announced after round 5 and a team managers meeting called. It was agreed that the starting line would be moved as far as possible upwind (a distance of about 1.5km) and F1C completed followed by the next F1B flyoff. The available width for the starting line was limited by a slope on one side and, rather than have poor visibility for those positions, the starting pole spacing was reduced which caused a complaint. After round 6 of F1C a team managers meeting agreed to the F1B flyoff being on a new starting line on flatter ground. After the final round of F1C was completed, everyone involved with the F1B flyoff gathered at the new line and the flyoff was flown at 20.40 for a 12 minute maximum. It would be dark when models were returned and lighting was not available for processing on the field. The organisers allowed the competitors to come back in the morning with models and altimeters. There was thus no security of models or motors and thus processing of winning models was effectively not possible. In the morning some motors were weighed and altimeters were read for competitors requesting that.

Conditions were excellent for the F1C morning flyoff, held from the starting line that had been used for the F1B flyoff.

Timekeeping

As noted above there were particular problems in F1C, but in general the timing for the other classes was also rather poor, with some timekeepers not paying attention to models and others not using binoculars.

Opening and Closing Ceremony

The opening ceremony was held at a sports stadium in Simeria in good weather. The prize-giving and banquet were held at an events facility just outside Simeria. Two trophies could not be awarded since they are still retained in Russia. Medals were not available for the females in F1A and F1B following a breakdown of communications about the number of female competitors and the confirmation of the need for medals. Diploma were presented and the medals will be sent to the winners after the event.

Protests

One protest was received from the UK against flying continuing with lightning in the near vicinity of the field. This was upheld by 2 jury members and flying stopped. After flying restarted the UK submitted another protest for the same reason. This was not immediately passed to the jury and by the time it was received conditions had approved and so the protest was rejected.

Observations

There were many shortcomings in this event. Since Romania has been awarded both the F1ABC World Championship and the F1ABP Junior Championships in 2025, an annex to this report gives requirements and recommendations for these events.

Conclusion

The Jury thank the Romanian Modelling Federation for this event.

Annex to Jury report – Recommendations for Championships in 2025

Flying field

A flying field suitable for the event is required, such as Salonta or equivalent fields.

Jury

It is essential that Jury members are independent of the organisation and are not involved in any aspect of running the event. If this creates a problem for Romania to nominate a suitably qualified member that fulfils this requirement then having all jury members from other countries should be considered.

C.7.1.(c) The FAI Jury shall remain independent of the organiser(s) to enable it to enforce the rules of the FAI and act as an independent arbiter in disputes between the organiser(s) and the competitors.

Contest Director

The contest director should be able to speak English

Timekeepers

It is preferable to have experienced timekeepers. It is necessary to adequately brief the timekeepers on the need to pay attention to the model at all times during the flight, and to use binoculars and tripods when required (not leaving this too late) and to give the benefit of doubt to the competitor when timing engine runs when other engines are running.

Model processing

This must be done according to the Sporting Code without introducing a new identification.

F1.3.1(a) Model specification certificates and corresponding models must be presented on arrival at the time of registration for the event. The organiser will indicate that these models have been registered by a stamp or marking on the model across the edge of the FAI sticker.

This stamp or marking must not introduce any alternative model identification, this being provided by the model identification code (C.11.1)

During the competition it is necessary to process models of at least 20% of the competitors.

Plans must be made to process the winning models immediately after the final flight or to impound the models for late rechecking.

Team managers meeting

It is suggested that the draw for starting positions should be made in conjunction with the Jury before the meeting, so that pole positions can be printed and distributed at the meeting.

Fuel

Two version of the standard fuels for F1C should be provided with the alternative lubricants. On the final entry form information should be requested of which lubricants are required and how much fuel they wish to purchase for use in practice before the competition day.

Most importantly the fuel must be supplied in containers that are clearly labelled.

F1C.2 Fuel to a standard formula for glow plug and spark ignition motors will be supplied by the organisers, and must be used for every official flight. The composition shall be as follows: 80% methanol, 20% oil. Oil can be castor oil or synthetic oil. There is a free choice for the competitor.

C.13.8 Fuel

a) Fuel supplied by the organisers shall be mixed from top quality material. Methanol shall be at least commercial grade without additives. Castor oil, when used, shall be first pressing castor oil.

b) Standard Fuel

i) When a standard FAI fuel is specified, the fuel that the organisers shall supply for practice and for the contest shall be of the same constituents, mixed in a single batch.

ii) Standard fuels which are used for contest flights shall be part of the entry fee. Practice fuel supplied by the organiser to the competitors shall be charged at cost.

iii) The standard FAI fuel for practice must be requested in advance (at the time of entry).

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(d) Fuel supplied to competitors must be clearly labelled including a list of constituents and warnings of flammability and danger if swallowed.

Communications

Bulletins should be sent out with adequate notice, in particular the final bulleting should be sent well in advance of the dates when participants have started their journey to the Championships.

The Whats App communications with team managers was useful but needs to be established in advance and to include all team managers (and possibly adding an email distribution for those not using Whats App) , e.g by collecting team managers' mobile and email contact details on the final entry form.

Public address

The use of a hand-held loud-hailer was inadequate at the European Championships. With a longer starting line at the World Championships it will be necessary to have a more powerful system with multiple speakers in order to communicate clearly with the complete starting line.

Results

A process must be established to upload live results to a web site during the competition.

Copies of the signed final results should be distributed to team managers at the prize-giving.

Dates

The dates for the two Championships to be held in Romania should be finalised as soon as possible. It had previously reported that the events would be separate but also some rumours that they might be combined. The Organiser Agreements must be completed if these have not yet been completed.