

To: John Good, Chair, SSA Competition Committee
From: John Godfrey, Chair, SSA Competition Rules Sub-Committee
Subject: Report for Fall SSA Board of Directors Meeting
Date: August 27, 2015

The rules sub-committee is now beginning the most active portion of the year's activities, during which we will determine what (if any) changes to the rules will be submitted to the SSA Board for approval at the winter meeting.

During the year, comments, suggestions and observations are gathered from the pilot and organizer community, which form the basis for the annual Pilot Opinion Poll. Sources for poll topics include minutes from a number of meetings with pilots, crews, and organizers held at various contests this year, along with private communications from pilots to the committee. The poll is scheduled to be open from October 1st through October 18th.

As is also the norm, one seat on the committee is up for election this year. The four year term will be filled either by incumbent John Cochrane or a new nominee. The election coincides with the Poll. The winner will be seated at the annual Rules Committee meeting to be held in November.

Promoting participation in fair and satisfying competitions that are consistent with acceptably safe operations is the most important goal of the Rules Committee. All other objectives are in this context. With this in mind, below is a recap of key 2015 topics.

1. Flarm

This collision avoidance product continues to mature and gain pilot acceptance. Anecdotal input covers both positive and negative aspects of its use and especially its use to gain competitive advantage by gathering and displaying data on other gliders.

The (sanctioned) Nephi OLC camp required Flarm carriage. The Standard / 15Meter National at Harris Hill did not require Flarm, but mandated that any Flarm had to be operated in "stealth" mode (to minimize competitively useful information while maintaining collision avoidance capability).

The BGA has been actively engaged with both Flarm and the IGC regarding refinement of the "stealth" mode to better achieve its intended purpose: maintain collision avoidance utility and minimize competitive usefulness. In 2015 the BGA began and then halted a mandate that required use of stealth in competition.

We have engaged with the BGA and Flarm to be part of the conversation on the future definition of a stealth mode. As the USA is not well integrated to the European gliding community (we have our own rules, ranking etc.) it will take some effort to be heard.

The results of the Nephi and Harris Hill experiments have produced a very clear split in the pilot community on the issue of using stealth.

2. Classes

- a. The US Club Class National Championship at Hobbs drew 18 pilots. 3 of these were juniors. This was the first year for the US Club Class as a standalone contest (separate from the Sports Nationals).
- b. Standard and Open classes continue to attract limited participation (even with a modified handicapping scheme for Standard, enabling older ships to be more competitive). Whether to continue the practice of handicapping a Standard Class National needs to be reviewed (with an eye to its potential effect on the growth of US Club Class), as all Standard class ships save for motorgliders are eligible to compete in both the US Club and the Sports Class.
- c. The need to carefully plan and co-locate Nationals to facilitate pilot participation in multiple contests and make it attractive to organizers remains a challenge.

3. Fostering Participation and Use of Sanction Fees

- a. In 2013 we offered to underwrite 90% of the entry and tow fees for any US junior for one contest. In 2013 four applications were received.
- b. For 2015 we removed the one-contest restriction. To date in 2015 we have received six applications. We continue to work the issue of better communication to the pilot community. We plan to continue the program for 2016.

4. Technology

If, when, how and with what constraints to allow increasingly ubiquitous, small, cheap (and hard to police) technology into the competition cockpit is an ongoing discussion, often centered on how it affects the nature of the sport. Devices have become so portable that policing compliance becomes essentially futile. Examples include:

- FLARM "radar" that paints location and performance of teams and competitors
- Weather radar via smartphones or ADS-B
- ADS-B based glider tracking
- The Sailplane Tracker using a cellphone data network device
- AHRS capability on Smartphones and numerous soaring computers

Concurrent with the publishing of the advisory of rules changes for 2015, the Committee also stated that strong consideration was being given to removing the restriction on carriage of electronic voice/data communication devices in 2016. We expected this to generate vigorous debate during this season but it has not save for a few pilots. We will re-publicize before the poll and hope to get good input from the pilot poll.

5. National Contest Trophies

Significant discontent has surfaced among some accomplished and respected pilots as to the way the SSA has handled the administration of the historic and long standing (e.g. DuPont) endowed trophies and they have expressed concerns as to whether we are respecting the terms of the original endowment.

This year we took the trophies out of storage at the NSM and shipped them to the respective contests for presentation and "raising in the winners' hands" before their fellow competitors.

In addition, Chairman Richard Maleady formed an ad-hoc committee to review and address the overall trophy and award process.

From a rules and participation perspective, having meaningful, ongoing and tangible recognition of accomplishment seems very important. The fuss made over the presentation this year was reported to be well received.

It will again be a busy fall.
Respectfully submitted,
John Godfrey (QT), Chair