



## **GUIDELINES FOR CHIEF JUDGES**

International Aerobatic Club, Inc.

A Division of the Experimental Aircraft Association  
and the National Aeronautic Association

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## GUIDELINES FOR CHIEF JUDGES

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### INTRODUCTION

Since the earliest days of aerobatic competition, it has been clear that someone had to "lead the choir" on the judging line. Because there were so few people who were qualified in competitive judging at that time, chief judges often did double duty. They graded aerobatic figures while trying to handle all of the paperwork and supervisory duties associated with the running of the line and the contest.

Each of these two assignments required and demanded full attention. It was a happy day indeed when six or more judges showed up at an aerobatic contest and the chief judge could truly "chief". Since the early days of IAC, the club has encouraged the idea of a chief judge doing those duties alone and only assuming the role of a figure-grading judge if necessary.

How is a chief judge selected? What are the qualifications? How can we train ourselves to be competent and efficient chief judges? What is required of this person when we "read between the lines" of the IAC "Official Contest Rules"? These are the questions this booklet will discuss.

### WHAT DO THE RULES SAY?

The IAC "Official Contest Rules" deal with the duties of the chief judge in several sections. You should, to start with, carefully review these rules. Here is a summary:

#### **Table of Organization**

The "Table of Organization" shows the chief judge on the "supervision" line from the contest director. You might think of the contest director as the producer of a circus. The chief judge is compared to the ringmaster who controls the timing and expedites each act to keep the program moving along smoothly. The chief judge might be thought of as a referee in hockey, soccer, or basketball who plays the major role in controlling the pace and demeanor of the game.

It is IAC's position the chief judge does not really "answer" to the contest director, though the director is responsible for choosing chief judges. Thus, the chief, not the contest director supervises the judges themselves, and the director should in no way insert himself or herself onto the judging line. This separates contest administration and

organization from judging ... two separate areas entirely. Thus, the chief judge should approve anything that affects judging or the conduct of the judging line. The contest director, who may not have any experience whatsoever in judging or flying does not arbitrarily make these sorts of decisions.

#### **Paragraph 1.5.**

This is the job description for the chief judge. Read the specific duties of the chief judge very closely.

The chief judge is required to check to see all Free program forms (Forms A, B, and C) have been certified by a current judge. As the pilot turns in these forms, the registrar also has it on his/her checklist to check the forms. However, it remains the final responsibility of the chief judge. Note the date of the judge's signature does not have to be in the current year if there have been no rules changes that would affect the legality of the sequence. However, **keep in mind that numerous changes to the Aresti Aerobatic Catalogue made most Free programs obsolete as of January 1, 2000. Due to these changes, all Free programs must have a sign-off year of 2000 or later.**

#### **Paragraph 1.13.**

The contest director should have sent invitations to qualified judges several weeks or months in advance of the contest. IAC Headquarters provides a copy of the "IAC Approved List of Judges" with the contest director's packet for this purpose. IAC Headquarters sends the last updated list to the director with the Unknowns. Thus, the contest director has usually carried out this particular duty and the chief judge should review who is available upon arrival. There never seems to be a surplus of judges.

#### **Paragraph 1.16.**

Either the contest director or the chief judge chooses boundary judges. In the real world, the contest director usually delegates these duties to the volunteer coordinator. The volunteer coordinator is then responsible for having people to fill all required positions. The chief judge is made aware of whom these people are before the first briefing. Usually, the volunteer coordinator does this. The chief judge is provided a volunteer log



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sheet on his clipboard with the names filled in.

### **Paragraph 3.16.**

These rules require the chief judge and the contest director to review the computation of all scores and to certify these scores after the review as "official" by signing them.

### **Paragraph 4.6.**

The chief judge conducts the pilot briefing for the category(s) he/she is the chief for. This section in the rules gives a checklist of what items are covered. They will be covered in the order they are listed with the roll call the very first order of business.

### **Paragraph 4.8.**

This is a checklist for the chief judge's briefing for judges, assistants, recorders, and hot box panel operators. This can be done just after the pilot briefing, which usually works well, or out on the judges line itself.

### **Paragraph 4.9.4.**

Penalty points are assessed for a competitor missing his/her starting position. The worksheet includes these penalties. The chief judge must now assign a new starting position for this competitor.

### **Paragraph 4.10.**

The chief judge determines the official wind direction. The competitor, of course, has the option of starting in any direction but it still must agree with the wind direction stated on Form B and C.

### **Paragraph 4.11 & 4.12.**

The chief judge is responsible for the correct application of boundary, altitude, and deadline penalties. With respect to altitude infringements, this is determined by a majority of the judges. These various penalties are marked down on the "Chief Judge Penalty Form" which is included in the packet sent to the contest director. This sheet is easy to use and is usually filled out by an assistant to the chief judge under his/her direction.

An assistant to the chief judge may be handling radio communications with the boundaries. It remains the chief judge's responsibility as to when these penalties are applied since it is often a judgment call as to when a competitor was "in" and "out" of the box according to the radio call in. The

chief judge, you must remember, is a certified IAC official -- assistants to the chief judge and the boundary judges may not be.

### **Paragraph 4.13.**

This paragraph deals with recall signals and hot box controls -- one of the most important responsibilities of the chief judge since safety of the contest is very much involved here. The chief judge will operate the VHF radios to notify pilots of changes in box status. Thus, the chief judge is truly the controller of the box. The chief judge supervises the "panel flipper," if panels are used, to make the box panels orange and white --thereby controlling entry into the box.

### **Paragraph 4.18.**

This paragraph deals with mechanical defects. The chief judge will determine the sequence of flights of any re-flies after the technical committee does its work.

### **Paragraph 4.21.**

This rule lists those personnel permitted on the judging line. The chief judge must authorize any others to be there.

## **ARRIVING AT THE CONTEST**

There are several items for you to start work on once you get to the contest site itself:

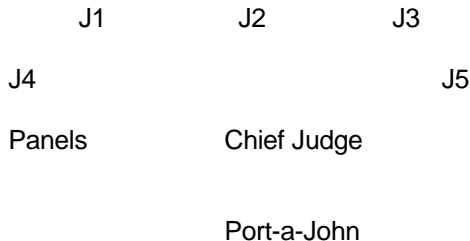
1. Meet with the contest director upon your arrival as well as with the volunteer coordinator. Determine which of those present is a qualified judge and select the judges for use in various categories if the volunteer coordinator has not done so already. Use people keeping in mind their experience, what categories they might be flying in (don't have them judging and then immediately flying if possible), and what their preferences are.
2. Find out if the aerobatic box markings are in place as well as the boundary judge sighting devices. If possible, go out and look at them. This may save you some trouble later on if they are not correct.
3. Verify the contest director has arranged for the following items:
  - a. Hot box control panels at judging station. (Optional)
  - b. Stopwatches (experienced chief judges



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- usually bring their own).
  - c. VHF radio for communication with competitors and radios for communication with starter and boundary judges - preferably on different frequencies to avoid interference. This usually requires two radios at the chief judge's station.
  - d. Batteries (spares for radios).
  - e. Tables (usually required at chief judge's station only - one 4 X 8 table is enough).
  - f. Chairs (enough for all judges, assistants, and recorders).
  - g. Toilet facilities (usually a port-a-john on the line).
  - h. Transportation (often forgotten - a way to get to your station quickly as they can be out in the boonies).
  - i. Fire extinguisher on starting line.
4. Scout the judging line site and decide where you will want the chief judge's station, judges, and panel flippers to be located. Keep in mind you should be close enough to call conferences and to communicate instructions to judges, such as "Heads up!", and others.

Consider the following layout for the judges:



This layout is compact, lends itself to quick conferences, and the judges experience a minimum of parallax. Of course, the layout depends on the terrain. Oftentimes the common "column" of judges, aligned with the Y-axis, is seen at contests.

- 5. Judges should be advised of their assigned categories as soon as possible by the volunteer coordinator, so they know where to be and when. If practice days are held before the contest, this is often a good opportunity for category judges to get together and do some practice judging along with some critiquing afterwards.

- 6. The volunteer coordinator will assign the judges their assistants and recorders. You should remind the individual judge to be sure to review the qualifications of these individuals with them before the contest starts. This makes sure they are qualified for these positions. The assistants, of course, must be able to proficiently read the Aresti symbols to not be a hindrance to the judge but rather a real help. Thus, the most experienced people must be chosen for assistants and less experienced people used as recorders. Recorders must be able to write down the grades and, in addition, use abbreviations in the "remarks" column to record the comments the judge has made. This benefits the competitor later on.
- 7. Before the Free program is flown for your category(s), be sure to review the Forms B and C for unusual figures and entry direction. Judges should be briefed on these figures to make sure they understand how to grade them. This can actually be done at the line just before the start of that particular program for that category.

### BEFORE LEAVING CONTEST HEADQUARTERS FOR JUDGING FIRST CATEGORY

- 1. Verify that boundary judges have been dispatched with the correct paperwork, radios, chairs, umbrellas, and water jugs. The contest director should have taken responsibility for all of this equipment. It should be in place, ready to move, well before the contest starts.
- 2. The volunteer coordinator should be used as much as possible here to corral your judging teams and get them headed toward the judging line as soon as possible. This is always a challenge – to get people in the right place at the right time. Particularly when the judging line is in a remote location. Usually, it is best for the chief judge's assistant to gather up the required clipboards from the registrar. He/she will bring them in a box for distribution at the judging line itself. This keeps them from getting away at the wrong time. The chief judge will be sure all equipment is on hand which was discussed before.



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### ARRIVING AT THE JUDGING LINE

1. Clipped to the top of your chief judge's clipboard should be the volunteer log sheet – prepared by the volunteer coordinator. This provides you the names of all volunteers assigned to this flight program. Take roll call at the judging line to make sure everyone is there.
2. Assign numbered positions to each judge. It doesn't really make any difference who sits where but the judge should keep the same number through the contest. Instruct recorders to put their judge's name and position number on every score sheet.
3. It doesn't hurt to recheck the order of paperwork. Thus, before everyone sits down in their seats, go through the order of flight you, the chief, are provided. Make sure everyone's clipboards are in the proper order.
4. You can have your judge's briefing now if not held already. However, it is always a good idea to review the following: how conferences are called and why, how you'll handle zeroes, high and low altitude calls (how the recorder should show this on the score sheet (Form A), missed figures, extra figures, interruptions, and rest breaks. Also, brief the judges to call out the figure number when assigning grades. This helps eliminate confusion. For example, "Figure 5, 8.5" and so on. We suggest a break of five minutes or so every 10 competitors to let the judges stretch their legs and rest their eyes. Ask judges to carefully guard against "halo" effects.
5. Discuss with your own assistants and hot box panel flippers how you want them to handle their jobs. Ask them all to keep their eyes open for transient aircraft in the box – for safety reasons. One assistant will handle the chief judge's penalty worksheet, another will serve as timer and general helper (to review score sheets (Form A) when they are collected up by runners before being sent to the computer room). Panel flippers must be carefully briefed as to what signals you will use for them to do their jobs. Remember, they work under your supervision. Do not let them run you!
6. Establish radio contact with the starter, boundary, and deadline judges. Remember the best procedure is to have two separate channels -- one for the starter and another for the boundaries and deadline. If you have not briefed your boundary judges yet, be sure to do it now, advising them that you must be called on the radio whenever pilots enter the box, leave the box, cross the deadline, and re-enter over the deadline.
7. You must have a portable VHF radio for communication with pilots. Be sure to check it now.
8. When everyone is in place, ready to judge, and full radio communications have been established, release the "low line" pilot. This pilot may also fly warm up maneuvers for the judges.

### DURING THE CONTEST

1. Advise the panel flippers when to give each signal to the pilots. What works best is for the panel flipper to make the box "orange" when the competitor enters the first figure. He should leave it orange until you signal him to make it "white". This clears the next competitor into the box. In no case should he do this without your clearance. You should remind him that you occasionally get quite busy at the end of a flight and if you forget to signal "white" he should query you about it.
2. Alert judges and boundary judges when "low lines" are flown. They will not think that the first competitor is flying.
3. Alert judges when the next competitor is approaching the box. The familiar IAC "Heads Up!" voice signal works very well. IAC recommends that the chief judge have a megaphone.
4. Things can get very busy when a competitor starts making errors, such as leaving out individual or whole lines of figures. The chief judge should watch the sequences as well so it can be properly sorted out and reconstructed later in conference. Do not hesitate at any time to stop the contest and call a conference to get it all straight among judges. You owe this to the competitors. Your assistant marks



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interruptions, boundary infringements, and other penalties on your worksheet.

5. Instruct runners to pick up paperwork after each flight -- unless you decide to call a conference. Then, the judges should hang on to their score sheets (Form A) so you can review what occurred.
6. It is the responsibility of the starter to keep the flow of competition aircraft coming. However, if he/she is inexperienced, sometimes the flow will be too slow. Be sure to offer some "encouragement" from time to time to speed things up. There is nothing more useless than wasted contest time, unused, precious daylight, and good weather that is not utilized.
7. After each flight, your assistant who is recording the boundary penalties should check with each boundary to verify these outs. Oftentimes, radio transmissions do not get through, so a double-check is mandatory. You should remember that the sheets the boundary judges used are not used by contest officials -- only your own worksheet. They are only used to settle protests or when radios break down.
8. When the runner brings back the score sheets (Form A) to the chief judge's station, have your other assistant spread them out on the table to review the following:
  - a. Grades for every figure for every judge.
  - b. High altitude calls.
  - c. Low altitude calls.
  - d. Zeroes.
  - e. Average marks.
9. If no grade appears for any figure, have your assistant enter an "A," which means "average," and initial that change. It is not necessary to actually calculate the average score as the IAC Scoring System will do that automatically.
10. You only apply low and high altitude penalties if a "majority" of the judges agree on every figure they are to be applied on. If there is only a minority in agreement, then no penalties are applied. Remember in low altitude penalties, there are "penalty" lows and "disqualification" lows. Ask your judges, when they record these observations in the "remarks" section to note "low" or "low-low" for these. In applying

the penalties, as an example, remember if two judges call a figure "low-low" and one judge calls it "low", only "penalty" low points will be applied. If there is a suspicion in your mind a judge may have forgotten to mark a low altitude call down in the "remarks", be sure to call a conference and discuss it. The hallmark of IAC is safety in competition aerobatics and our flawless safety record is testimony to this. Judges simply cannot tolerate low flying and penalties must be applied. Remember the IAC "Official Contest Rules" state your first responsibility is SAFETY and you are charged with making sure these rules are applied.

11. It certainly helps if the chief judge has time to review the score sheets (Form A). This is to determine if the judging is fairly consistent and the majority of the judges are consistently catching zeroes. If particular judges are consistently missing zeroes or giving out too many unjustified ones, a private conference between you and that judge might be in order. Remember, if there is difficulty on the judging line with properly assessing zeroes, conferences are mandatory. See Chapter 7 of the IAC Rule Book for details on how to handle judges' conferences.
12. When the paperwork meets your satisfaction (all squares filled), then send it in to the computer room. This is the last opportunity a judge can make changes. Once the score sheets (Form A) leave the chief judge's station, they come under the jurisdiction of the contest jury (see IAC rule 7.5.3.). The chief judge penalty form should go on top of the judges score sheets (Form A) (which should be assembled in chronological order to keep computer operators happy). It is not necessary to have the runners wear themselves out running each competitor's sheets in every time. You can wait until a batch of two or three are ready. Of course, this depends on how close your station is to the computer room. It usually isn't very close.

As we said before, during the flights you will be following the sequences in reference to the flimsy (Forms B/C). Since you are not assigning grades yourself, you can watch the entire operation of the contest. You can pick out gross errors on the part



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of pilots that may later result in zeroes and conferences. It is your job to help the other judges keep up with what is going on -- again by calling conferences if necessary. In the case of an interruption, it is a good idea for you to advise judges on when figure grading will resume.

### **BEFORE LEAVING THE JUDGES LINE**

1. Ask the judging teams to clean up the area. Always leave a contest site cleaner than when you arrived. This makes you welcome the next year.
2. If this flight will be the last of the day, bring all chairs and tables to a central point for pick up. This is a courtesy to the contest director and his helpers.
3. Keep track of all equipment. You should assume responsibility for radios, batteries, stopwatches, smoke grenades, and clipboards. Remember this is borrowed equipment and should be returned to its rightful owner after the contest is over. Turn them over to the next chief judge or to the contest director or registrar, whatever is appropriate.
4. Conduct a debriefing of judges. Usually, this should be done with assistants and recorders present. They can learn from these situations as well. Remember you are not only helping certified judges, you are helping to train new ones. Good habits developed now will be carried out for many years. Set up personal conferences or critiques with any weak or biased judges you identify. If a judge is not competent, you should withdraw him from judging. Handle it as diplomatically as possible remembering that we are all volunteers.

### **BACK AT CONTEST HEADQUARTERS**

1. Check with the computer room before leaving the contest site. There may be last minute problems with paperwork.
2. Verify and sign all applications for achievement awards. The individual competitor seeking the award will arrange this with you.
3. Find out when and where you are to sign and certify the final results for that flight program and the contest itself. Don't forget to include

the time of signing in accordance with IAC rule 3.16.1.

4. Ask the contest director when and where score sheets (Form A) will be available to contestants. Competitors will likely ask you this question.
5. Be willing to help out any pilot who asks for advice, critique, or help. Remember, "grass roots" aerobatics is sharing your experience with others --another hallmark of IAC.

Keep cool! Go home and rest up for the next session! Take good care of the creature comforts of all the people who help you. By doing this, you will provide the competitors with the most accurate and consistent grades possible from your judging teams.