

FAI F3C WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

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The 7th FAI F3C R/C Helicopter World Championships (WC) was organized by the Turkish Aeronautic Association (TURK HAVA KURUMU - THK) to be part of the first World Air Games (WAG). The THK also organized an international Free-Flight contest to take place at the same time and site. The competitions took place on a large field near the town of Gölbaşı about 35km south of Ankara. The F3C competition was mostly staffed by members of several Turkish modeling clubs. However, the flight line coordinator was Manfred Dittmayer of Austria and frequency control was handled by Yehuda Panuel of Israel. Both of these gentlemen were enlisted by the organizers because of their experience.

Sixty-two contestants from 28 countries were registered for the competition. The headquarters for the contest officials, FAI Judges, FAI Jury and most contestants was the Dedeman Hotel located in downtown Ankara. Although rated as a four star hotel, many of the rooms and the food did not live up to that rating. A few teams stayed in more modern hotels which were also closer to the flying site. Breakfast and dinner were provided at the Dedeman Hotel. Lunch packages were provided at the flying site.

Contestant registration and model processing took place on Saturday 6. September in the Dedeman Hotel. Each model was checked for FAI sticker, proper markings and to assure compliance with FAI regulations. Each transmitter was checked for carrier frequency and bandwidth. The activities for each day were presented at a team manager's meeting at 20:00 hours.

The helipads on the contest site were laid out facing north which permitted their use for most of the day without the sun getting into the judges' or pilots' eyes. A three-man pup tent was provided for each team. Two large tents were located adjacent to the flying site. One tent contained the transmitter impound, frequency control and computer scoring system and the other was used by spectators. Thankfully, the field was large enough and the wind always in the right direction so that the simultaneous international free flight competition never interfered with the F3C WC.

For the official practice day, the organizers ran a zero round in order to calibrate against available daylight. The FAI Jury recommended that the starting time for the practice round be changed to 07:00 hours (from 08:00) and this was a wise change. Due to some delays the practice round actually did not begin until 07:45 and ended at approximately 18:30 hours. At 19:00 hours there was insufficient daylight to fly.

The first elimination round followed the same time table as the practice round. The Japanese team looked very strong during this round with Hashimoto (1st) and Kobayashi (3rd) and Sensui (4th). The Americans were close behind with Youngblood (2nd) and Mann (5th) place. The strongest European pilot was Kessler of Switzerland (6th) and 1995 World Champion Hiatt was tied with Hoenle in 7th position. The 9th and 10th places were held by Ostergaard of Denmark and Graber of Switzerland. Unfortunately, the 1996 European Champion, Roessner of Germany, was unable to attend the contest.

After the second elimination round the top ten finishers were: 1. Hashimoto, 2. Sensui, 3. Youngblood, 4. Kobayashi, 5. Hiatt, 6. Kessler, 7. Mann, 8. Shilling, 9. Hoenle and 10. Graber.

After the third elimination round the top ten finishers were: 1. Hashimoto, 2. Youngblood, 3. Sensui, 4. Kobayashi, 5. Mann, 6. Hiatt, 7. Kessler, 8. Shilling, 9. Hoenle and 10. Haneberg.

After the fourth and final elimination round the top thirteen finishers that would go on to the flyoffs were: 1. Hashimoto, 2. Youngblood, 3. Sensui, 4. Kobayashi, 5. Mann, 6. Hiatt, 7. Kessler, 8. Shilling, 9. Hoenle, 10. Haneberg, 11. Christy, 12. Graber and 13. Ostergaard. The team standings were tabulated after this round and are shown in Table 1.

The weather for elimination rounds 1,2 and 3 was sunny, warm and dry with variable winds. Elimination round 4 encountered strong winds. A training flight with the "B" manoeuvre schedule was organized for the judges before the flyoffs started on Friday, 11. September. Flyoff number 1 was won by Kobayashi who really put in a barn burner with the more difficult manoeuvres of schedule "B". Hashimoto finished with a disappointing 4th place. However, Hashimoto came back to life during the second flyoff by winning it. The third and final flyoff sealed first place for Hashimoto when he and Sensui tied for first place and received 1000 points each. The final individual results are listed in Table 2.

The flying standard observed during the entire contest was extremely high. The 1997 F3C program was well received by the competitors and the new scoring procedure added an air of excitement with the individual winner not determined until the last round. There were no protests filed.

The award ceremony was split into two parts at the request of the F3C FAI Jury. The FAI Medals for the individual winners were first awarded at the flying site and this was repeated later at the Dedeman Hotel. The FAI certificates and trophies for the winning F3C teams were awarded at the Dedeman Hotel late in the evening. This F3C award ceremony was combined with the much larger Free-Flight award ceremony and was delayed for more than an hour. This created great confusion, unrest and discomfort among the F3C competitors and guests. The F3C Jury's suggestion to first award the individual FAI medals at the F3C flying site was a good one and resulted in excellent pictures for the modeling press. It is recommended that in the future all awards be given out in daylight at the flying site.

It is encouraging for me to see five Junior pilots at this F3C World Championship. These pilots will carry the torch in the future. The pilots were Juan Esterlizi (Argentina), Mark Christy (UK), Scott Gray (Canada), Vesa Mutovaara (Finland) and Javier Valdeolmos (Spain). Since there is no separate Junior F3C event, the Juniors had to compete with the Seniors. Scott Gray and Mark Christy placed quite well by coming in 15th and 11th in the preliminary rounds respectively. Mark Christy was able to hold that position through the flyoffs. A special award ceremony was organized by the UK team for the five Juniors. Each participating team contributed funds for the special Junior prizes.

The sound level of each model was measured during the practice round and ranged from 80 to 89 dBA. The 1997 F3C noise limit is 90 dBA when measured over a soft (grass) surface. Thus, all models passed the test but one model was very close to failing. The average noise level was 84 dBA and 92% of the models exhibited a sound level of 86 dBA or less. We will have to keep an eye on the maverick 8 percent!

During the official practice round I noticed that a few pilots were inexperienced at flying the new F3C schedule A and B manoeuvres. The FAI Jury kept a close eye on these pilots and asked the Contest Director to recommend to these pilots that they only fly the manoeuvres that they could execute safely. The affected pilots agreed to this restriction. By the later rounds these pilots had improved their skills significantly and collected invaluable experience just by participating in such a major event.

As a side note, when Mr. Idris Aslan the Turkish CIAM delegate first announced that they wanted to include the F3C R/C Helicopter World Championships in the World Air Games I, as chairman of the FAI/CIAM F3C Subcommittee, expressed some serious concerns. The first concern was that of safety because we had heard many stories in the news about instability of the government. The second concern was that the Turks planned to run an international free-flight competition on the same site and at the same time. This had the potential of seriously interfering with the F3C WC. Another concern was the lack of experienced F3C people in Turkey. Well, we never saw any evidence of an unstable government. The second concern was minimized when the organizers took my advice and constructed two widely separated F3C contest areas (and luck with the weather). The shortage of experienced F3C people was solved by bringing in experienced people from abroad for the key positions.

However, several aspects of the competition could have been handled better. The printed information received prior to the event was adequate but often late. A few teams were unable to get fuel into Turkey while other teams experienced serious delays in getting their models through Turkish customs. This was the first WC without an official pictorial competition program which significantly reduced its stature and

the traditional socializing between teams. Local officials with a better command of the English language would have dramatically improved the operation. The fact that the contest site was dictated by other simultaneously flown competition classes (i.e. Free-Flight, F3B and Space) was a detriment to the F3C WC. Many competitors wondered why the Turkish organizers advertised the F3C WC as part of the 1st WAG when in fact it preceded the WAG opening ceremony by one week. The headquarters hotel should not be located more than 45 minutes from the flying site. Standby airline tickets should not be used for transport of foreign staff, judges and jury and they should arrive at least two days prior to the start of the competition. The closing Banquet fell into disarray because it included the much larger (more than 200 contestants) International Free-Flight event and F3C World Championships. The banquet hall became so crowded that some of the contest staff was asked to make room for contestants and WAG officials. In protest, several F3C teams left and dined at other restaurants. There was no closing ceremony for the F3C WC. And last, but certainly not least, there was no public acknowledgment for the hard work done by the Turkish F3C contest staff, FAI Judges, Jury and foreign specialists.

Some aspects of the competition went very well. There was no lack of room at the flying site. The weather was nearly perfect. The event successfully used the internet to disseminate information before, during and after the competition. One of my major concerns about the competition was the computer scoring with the new F3C program. Mr. Ata Aksoy from Ankara came to the rescue with an excellent computer program for the new F3C schedule. He did the scoring for the entire contest and saved the day on several occasions when the results/printouts needed some minor fixes.

The FAI Judges Tobias Schulz of Germany, Kiyokazu Sugaki of Japan, Dag Eckhoff of Norway, Jürg Schmitter of Switzerland and Tom Unger of the USA deserve the biggest thanks because they worked the hardest by judging 248 preliminary flights and 39 flyoff flights. Although the FAI Jury is not normally allowed to help run a competition, in this instance considerable aid was gladly given by Yalcin Bozduman (Turkey), Dr. Georg Breiner (Austria) and the author (USA).

In summation, the 7th F3C World Championships was run in a fair and friendly atmosphere. The World Air Games organizers, Contest Director Tamer Ekinici and his F3C contest staff went to great lengths to make every participant feel at home. Some of the organizational problems resulted from running several simultaneous competitions and being part of the very ambitious first World Air Games. Speaking for the FAI F3C community I would like to thank the Turkish Aeronautic Association, the F3C contest staff and the FAI Judges for a successful F3C World Championships.