

2ND FAI F3C R/C HELICOPTER WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

BERN / BERP AIRPORT SWITZERLAND

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In order to provide a little background I would like to describe the events leading up to the 2nd FAI F3C World Championships (WC). At the conclusion of the first FAI F3C World Championships in 1985 in Toronto, Canada the Japanese Team Manager made an offer to sponsor the 1987 World Champs in Japan. At the April 1986 FAI CIAM Plenary meeting held in Paris the F3C subcommittee fully expected a firm offer to be submitted by the Japanese delegate. This offer was not made initially but after much pleading by the subcommittee a tentative offer was obtained with the expectation of receiving a firm offer later. During August we received word that Japan would be unable to sponsor the WC in 1987. Since there were no other offers, it meant no WC in 1987.

I was invited to serve as a member of the international FAI Jury at the 2nd FAI F3C European Championships in Toulouse, France in September, 1986. During the competition I spoke with the Swiss team manager Peter Oberli when the subject of a 1987 WC came up again. Peter had considered running the 1987 F3C WC in Switzerland but had been unable to locate a financial backer. He also felt that there was not enough time to properly organize it. I agreed that time was short but felt that lack of money would be the greater problem. The financial requirements were later discussed with mutual friend Dr. Ronald Cicurel and he promptly convinced us that the money could be raised. Thus, the 1987 F3C WC was born. However, the event did not become official until it was approved by the CIAM at their December, 1986 Bureau meeting. The WC was to be held at the Bern/Berp Airport in Switzerland between June 29 and July 4, 1987. The early date was mandated by the flying site (a full size glider port on the Bern/Berp Airport) becoming available for a two week period starting on June 27 when the gliders go into the mountains for slope soaring.

In October 1986 I was asked by the AMA to form a USA F3C Team Selection Committee (TSC) for the FAI F3C category. The most expedient thing for me to do at the time was to use the same people that already served as members of the R/C helicopter contest board. This newly formed committee got its first assignment in December when a site for the US team selection had to be selected. Through an advertisement in AMA's Model Aviation Magazine three groups had submitted proposals by the beginning of January, 1987 and the Dayton, Ohio site was unanimously chosen by the TSC membership. The sponsoring club was the Southern Ohio R/C Helicopter Association (SORCHA).

Due to severe time constraints a team manager was appointed in March by me as chairman of the TSC with the approval of the other members of TSC. Bob Harris, a member of the TSC and the AMA R/C helicopter contest board accepted the position and started working on uniforms and travel arrangements immediately. The F3C Team Trials were held May 23,24 1987 just one month before the Swiss WC with Robert Gorham, Curtis Youngblood and Mike Mas becoming the USA F3C team members. Tim Schoonard placed fourth and thus was the official alternate member.

I traveled to Europe one week before the competition to visit friends and to participate as a speaker at the FAI F3C Judges Course held on the weekend preceding the WC at Bern/Berp Airport. This course had been scheduled by the WC organizers and was attended by 26 people representing 13 countries and included the official WC FAI Judges and FAI Jury members. During this course a number of very important issues were raised and resolved. On Sunday a practice flight was flown in front of all the attendees of the judges' course by Rudy Linder of Switzerland (not a competitor). Mr. Linder flew all of the F3C maneuvers in succession and the maneuvers were scored by each course attendee. The entire flight was videotaped and later an additional judges briefing was held to discuss each maneuver in detail. In my opinion, this exercise significantly improved the accuracy and consistency of judging.

The USA team arrived on Friday June 26 at Zurich airport and was welcomed by Swiss WC supporters and myself. Our team was off to a bad start when Robert Gorham discovered that his luggage and model boxes were lost enroute. After some investigation, the airline's computer showed no record of the model boxes although they were checked as excess baggage. Aside from that dilemma the team appeared to have survived the trip in good spirits and proceeded to the contest site to unpack and assemble their models. (Robert Gorham's models did finally arrive Saturday afternoon.). Practice flights were made at sites other than the official contest site over the weekend to determine the effect of the 1500 foot altitude on model performance. Some of the other teams chose to practice at the official site on Saturday and Sunday. Contest director Peter Oberli received word that Greece had sent a late entry to the WC and asked the FAI Jury if this was acceptable. The Jury placed the burden on the organizers because the increased workload would be theirs not ours. However, the FAI Jury recommended that the organizers send a letter to the Greek Aeroclub reminding them that future entries must be made before the advertised deadline. Thus, the number of country/team entries stood at 16 and the number of individual entries totaled 38.

The official opening ceremony for the 1987 F3C WC took place at 5:00pm on Sunday June 28. It was a very unique affair in that a full size Jet Ranger helicopter brought in four young ladies dressed in very fancy local costumes carrying a three foot long wooden key decorated with native flowers. This key was then handed to the three FAI Jury members who then proceeded to use that key to open the main hangar door. Tables with wine and assorted cheeses were located in this hangar and everyone was invited by the WC organizers to enter and enjoy the food and drink. The 2nd FAI F3C WC was officially underway. The flags of all the participating countries were hung from the ceiling in this hangar as shown in one of the pictures. The flag raising ceremony normally associated with an international competition was not performed here. At previous European and World Championships the flags were raised by the team managers of each country while the appropriate national anthem was played. We were informed that lunch and dinner would be served in this hangar during the entire contest by the airport restaurant catering service. Later on the starting order by country was randomly drawn by an official from the Swiss Aeroclub and each team was reminded to come to the field at 7:45am on Monday the official practice day to deliver the transmitters to the impound area. Each country's team was assigned a half hour time slot for the official practice. At the end of each country's training interval the models were checked for compliance with FAI rules.

As a member of the FAI Jury at the Primagaz Cup at Levens, France in May 1987 I had noticed a significant improvement in flying skills since the 1985 F3C WC in Canada. If it is possible, it appeared that skills had improved still further. A complaint was made by the Japanese team members about the angle of the sun relative to the judges position during the aerobatic maneuvers but it proved to be less of a problem than initially thought.

The first round of competition started promptly at 8:00am on Tuesday morning with excellent flying weather. There was essentially no wind present and the temperature was hovering about 75 degrees in the morning. The first pilot to put in a good flight was Iyobe of Japan and he held onto first place until Brennsteiner of Austria beat his score by 32.5 points. And when the former World Champ Taya put in his flight, Iyobe was pushed down to third place. A lunch break was called between 12:00 noon and 1:30pm and the round was just about half complete prior to this time. The flying resumed promptly at 1:30pm and the round ended with Brennsteiner, Taya, Iyobe, Lucchi and Gorham in 1st thru 5th Place with scores of 1558, 1530, 1525.5, 1524.5 and 1512 points respectively. The USA pilots Youngblood and Mas finished in 6th and 11th place respectively. The team standings after the first round were Japan - 1st, USA - 2nd and Federal Republic of Germany - 3rd. The air temperature progressively increased throughout the day to around 95 degrees and placed a significant burden on all, especially the judges. The organizers were ready for rain or sun because they provided large umbrellas for each FAI Judge, official and scorer. Although the umbrellas did interfere with the spectator's ability to observe the hovering maneuvers there was little choice but to use them. The hot weather also raised cane with some of the engines, resulting in flameouts. The first round of competition was completed at around 5:00pm which was well ahead of dinner time scheduled for 6:30pm. Many discussions were held over dinner and then everyone retired to the AMBASSADOR headquarters hotel for a swim in a rather warm pool.

The second day of competition also started out with mild temperatures and no wind but the forecast called for an afternoon thunder storm. Taya of Japan was the first to fly but was unable to better his score of the first round. The first USA pilot to fly was Mas and he exceeded his earlier score by 35.5 points. After the Judges break (one was planned for every 9 pilots) USA pilot Youngblood put in the highest score yet of 1564.5 points putting him in first place up to this point. The predicted thunder storm did arrive in the early afternoon and interrupted the contest for one and a half hours. When the flying resumed the temperature had decreased and the wind had increased somewhat. USA pilot Gorham was the first to fly under these conditions and unfortunately exceeded the 10 minute time limit which resulted in a zero score for the autorotation maneuver. As the afternoon wore on, the winds started to subside and the temperature climbed again and when Lyobe put in his second flight he received a fantastic score of 1620 points for a well executed flight. Next, all eyes were on Brennsteiner who had a very good first round score. He was able to better his score by 18 points to 1576 and this put him into second place. At the end of the second round the top five individuals were Lyobe - 1st with 1620 points followed by Brennsteiner 1576, Youngblood 1564.5, Ishikawa 1538 and Lucchi 1533.5. The team standings did not change after this round but the Japanese team increased their lead from 79.5 to 94.5 points over the second place USA team. The USA team also increased its lead over the third place German team from 235.5 to 337.5 points.

The third competition day started again with mild temperatures and little or no wind, perfect flying weather for R/C helicopters. The pilots to watch were Lyobe, Brennsteiner, Youngblood, Ishikawa, Lucchi and Taya. Of the six, Youngblood was the first to fly and achieved the second highest flight score up to this point of 1599.5 which moved him into first place. His closest rivals Lyobe and Brennsteiner were still to fly and the tension started to mount. But Lyobe and Brennsteiner were unable to beat Youngblood's score and thus found themselves in second and third place respectively. Lucchi and Gorham achieved their highest scores in this round and moved into 4th and 5th place ahead of Ishikawa and Taya. It was still a close race because the point spread from first to fifth place was 64 out of 3100 points or just over 2%! Let me point out that each of the top 5 pilots flew the maneuver with the highest K-factor, the Observation. It became quite obvious to me that in order to win, maneuvers with the highest K-factors had to be flown. I am also convinced that the fantastic weather contributed to the narrow point spread. The team standings remained the same as at the end of the second round.

If the tension was high during the third round it became unbearable during the fourth and final round. The official scores for the final round were not released by the contest organizers to give the FAI Jury a chance to verify the accuracy. Barring a serious mistake on the part of one of the top three pilots during this round the new FAI F3C World Champ was likely to be Youngblood, Lyobe or Brennsteiner. Lucchi, Gorham and Ishikawa still had a chance but would need very high scores in order to move up. Of the six pilots listed above, Gorham was the first to fly but was unable to improve on his third round score. Lyobe was next and achieved the highest flight score up to this point of 1626.5, a very nice flight under extreme pressure. Next came Brennsteiner who put in an even better flight which was awarded a score of 1651.5 but was not enough to move Lyobe out of first place. Lucchi was next to fly and achieved his highest flight score of 1587.5 and Ishikawa followed with his highest flight score of 1563 points. And now came the moment of truth for USA's Youngblood who was in first place at the end of the third round. Youngblood put in a near perfect flight with a score of 1654, the highest of the entire WC. I wonder if 18 year olds don't get nervous because Curtis Youngblood sure looked cool and collected out there. The 1987 World Champion in FAI F3C category was found. Up to this point only the FAI Jury knew the official results although most of the pilots had kept their own records after the third round and had a very good idea of the final standings. The official results were released just before dinner after the FAI Jury double and triple checked the second and third place scores which were only half a point (WOW!!) apart. The final standings were Curtis Youngblood (USA) 1987 World Champion - 1st Place, Tatsuya Lyobe (Japan) - 2nd Place and Josef Brennsteiner (Austria) - 3rd Place. The final team standings were Japan - 1st Place, USA - 2nd Place and Federal Republic of Germany - 3rd Place. At the end of the final round it was announced that a public award ceremony would take place Saturday afternoon when a large spectator crowd was expected for the demonstration flights.

Saturday was the final day of the WC with demonstration flights starting at 9:00am. A number of new R/C helicopters were flown by manufacturers' representatives and a few homebuilt twin rotor helicopters were also flown. Other aircraft flown were ducted fan jets, a very large biplane, a helicopter with a single rotor

blade, a helicopter towing a sailplane aloft, a group of five helicopters doing formation maneuvers. There was even a full size aerobatic plane flown by the Swiss national champion. He put on a fantastic demo of aerobatics very low to the ground and certainly got everyone's attention. The public World Championships award ceremony took place at 3:00pm when the Vice-President of the Swiss Aeroclub Mr. Werner Koelliker presented the gold, silver and bronze FAI Medals to Youngblood, Lyobe and Brennsteiner respectively. A rather large bottle of champagne was given to each of the three finalists and Curtis Youngblood shook his bottle, opened it and showered the crowd with champagne. Additional demonstration flights were conducted for the spectators and at 5:00pm the show ended. Everyone associated with the WC then headed for the Ambassador hotel to get ready for the closing banquet. The banquet was attended by approximately 230 people and a cold buffet was enjoyed by all. After the buffet but before the dessert the final standings were announced where each pilot's name was called out starting with the last place and each pilot was given a WC souvenir consisting of a piece of natural quartz from the mountains of the "Berner Oberland" region of Switzerland mounted on a hardwood pedestal. The FAI Judges and FAI Jury members also received the same souvenir. The first, second and third place pilots received a much larger version of the souvenir as a trophy. I know the owner of the quartz crystal museum in Meiringen and he tells me that this crystal is becoming quite rare and consequently expensive.

At the close of the banquet I announced that the 3rd FAI F3C World Championships will be sponsored by the USA. The event is presently scheduled to be part of a quadruple World Championships (F3A, F3B, F3C and F3D) to be held at the NAS in Virginia Beach around October 1989. I hope that we will be able to match the excellent organization demonstrated by the Swiss.

The camaraderie between individual pilots and teams that I witnessed throughout the competition was terrific. The idea of eating lunch and dinner in a hangar everyday did not appeal to me at first but I must admit that keeping all the participants close together has resulted in new friendships for me.

The Swiss Aeroclub, Peter Oberli and his 40 assistants are to be congratulated for a job very well done. The toughest assignment for any contest is the judging and we were very fortunate to have experienced FAI Judges. A big "Thank You" is due Lucio Della Toffola of Italy, Pierre Pignot of France, Wolfgang Roth (Chairman) of Germany, Henk Schoemaker of The Netherlands and Heinz Sutter of Switzerland. Thank you Peter Blommaart for your efforts in writing a daily computer newspaper about the WC. The newspaper, called the "Helisplitter - Daily Whirl", provided entertainment for us all. Thank you Peter Studer and co-workers for doing an outstanding job of generating the computerized contest results. And finally, thank you Fredy Pluess and staff for serving the excellent food in such a friendly and prompt manner each day.

And so the 2nd FAI F3C World Championships ended with the same beautiful weather that it started with. It was an event that will long be remembered by those fortunate enough to be there.