

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>FAI CONTROLLER REPORT - FREEFALL STYLE &amp; ACCURACY LANDING WORLD CUPS AND EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS – CHEBOKSARY, RUSSIA, 22-26 August 2013</b>	<b>Annex No. -</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Jiri Blaska, FAI Controller</b>	<b>Agenda ref. -</b>	<b>14.2.2</b>
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### **FAI Controller’s view of European Championships and World Cups in Freefall Style and Accuracy Landing - Cheboksary 2013**

The following report will be non-standard. My evaluation is going to be very subjective and I would like to notify you of this fact in advance.

In April 2013 I met Bruna De Paoli, an international judge, at the dropzone Belluno. She told me that she was no way envious of my post of FAI Controller as she fully realized that my work in Russia was going to be hard. I tried to make jokes and said: “Bruna, in most cases, the controller has two options – either to say YES or NO. But I can only say YES or YES. Since, honestly, is it possible after the site inspection, when one has found serious failures anywhere and anytime, to say ‘I am cancelling the competition, it will NOT be held!’...?”

Is it possible to do something like this in the real situation, when by that time people have bought their air tickets, applied for visas or even being already granted them, invested a lot of money into training, adjusted their programs and also many of them have planned their vacations? At the time of the site inspection it is not possible to stop the running train any longer. Who would cover the compensation for the damage? All you can do is hope that the organizers will do everything you have asked them for, that they will arrange everything you have pointed out, and especially that they will fulfill what they have promised. You can only wait to see how it all turns out in the end, and then, in particular, whether the participants were satisfied or dissatisfied. In my opinion and also judging from the reactions which I noticed, unfortunately the participants were rather unhappy with the situation in Cheboksary. Also saying goodbye to Bruna in Russia was sad while she was explaining to me with a raised voice what a blunder it was that at the final banquet there were no seats reserved for about 15 judges who had been removing errors in the results until the last minute. Bruna, please don’t be angry as there were so many other organizational failures that I finally had no more energy to deal with this particular one, hard as I tried.

As regards the site inspection tour, I always wondered why the FAI controllers travelled to the venue before the competitions if they could hardly see anything there. One can see the area in which everything will mostly be getting ready just before the championships, and so the controller can only trust the organizers that their assurances such as “here will be this” and “there will be that” will be true. I was aware of this, therefore I scheduled the inspection tour to Russia accordingly and together with Vladimir Gazetov, who was responsible for most of the work for this competition. I came there at the time of the national championship, which, however, took place at another dropzone. The reason why I wanted to get there was to have the opportunity to check the judging equipment properly and see it in practice. The concern about its quality had already been discussed at the last IPC meeting and I considered it to be one of the priorities as well. I think I succeeded in this matter and the quality of Russian systems – both for the accuracy landing and freefall style – allowed a proper evaluation of the results. Another issue was, however, the actual processing of the results during the competition itself.

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The other important thing which I could check out at the venue for the competition was the hotel booked for the sportsmen. It turned out to be a nine-floor hotel with only one lift for four persons and the mere capacity of 50 seats in the dining room. I regarded this as very problematic, so I immediately demanded a change of the hotel and strictly insisted on my decision. I achieved this goal and I am proud of it. In spite of some problems, I believe that the participants had good accommodations to be able to relax and sleep well and they could also enjoy delicious breakfast and dinner there. At this point I am satisfied with my work. When someone asked me what to expect, I gave him the following answer: “At the dropzone, please focus on your performance only, don’t look around too much and don’t fuss about what you can’t change. At the hotel relax and enjoy the comfort and good food. We will hopefully manage everything then.”

During the inspection tour I also made mistakes. I argued with the organizers for a long time about how to provide the internet connection for all participants, yet did not notice that in the whole area there was not a single water tap! Please forgive me that this did not strike my mind when I was there, but who would have expected anything like this in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Where were all the showers and restaurants at the airport for 150 people as promised in the Bulletin? Several times I had reminded the organizers of the fact that everything stated in the Bulletin had to be at the dropzone at the competitors’ disposal! “Here will be this and there will be that”... and all I could do was only put my trust in them.

I am glad that despite all the problems – and unfortunately there were many of them indeed – we have the official results of European Championships and World Cups in Accuracy Landing and Freefall Style. If I made a list of all the problems we had to deal with, I would offend the organizer and hurt feelings of many people who worked hard without claiming any financial or other remuneration for their performances. I by no means want to do this. On the contrary, there are many people to whom I should express my thanks for the tremendous work they did at European Championships and World Cups in Cheboksary. However, three main problems must be mentioned here, but not because I want to criticize someone's work. The reason why I am highlighting them now is that this way we can learn a lesson for next time.

1) Although I had made a great effort to ensure safe conditions for the freefall style events, I failed to do so. Whether the operating airspaces of both events were too close to each other is questionable today, as no accident luckily happened, but still I am convinced of this. A bigger problem was the quality of the landing area for parachutists on fast parachutes. After the contact with the ground, parachutists in light wind must often run or – and this happens even more often – they must slide a few tens of meters on the soles of their shoes. The landing area was dangerous for this and did not allow it at all. That is why the competitors kept landing on other sites, which, however, resulted in the fact that I was being given motions to penalize them for indiscipline. I did not penalize anyone, because they were only trying to find a safe area for landing.

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2) Once I was on the position of a meet director of the first category event as well. It was hard work. I envied Exi and Christian the post of FAI Controller. They walked with elegance and, thinking ahead, they were able to define precisely and always in time what had to be done, arranged or changed. Yet I, as a meet director, was running around trying to do and arrange everything in accordance with their instructions. And when I took their position, again, it was I who was running around, begging, arranging, explaining and persuading. It is my fault. I am a worker, not the boss.

The judges shout from the landing tuffet: “Jiri, we are thirsty, we want some coffee and some snack, no one cares about us!” So Jiri runs into their room to make the coffee, then takes bottled water and some snack and runs back to the landing area. In the same room where he prepares everything for those judges, who are working at their shift, the other ones are relaxing. They are reading books, browsing the internet, taking a nap. Sure, they have a full right to do so, but why cannot they help me take care of their colleagues in the sun? I wonder if they punished me this way for giving them instruction at the beginning of the competitions, when I explained to them how I imagined their work at the tuffet... But this is just a detail. As a much bigger problem I perceive the fact that I absolutely lacked the presence of such a meet director as there was in Prostejov 2009. Please do not get me wrong as I am far from praising myself. What I mean is that the meet director is not an honorary position, which can be carried out on the distance without local knowledge. This was the main problem. In my opinion the meet director should be the ‘heart and brain’ of the competition, not only its guest.

3) The competition was organized by non-parachutists. They were clever young people from the office of the minister of sport. They were hardworking, diligent and smart, and they spoke English. However, they did not know what parachuting is. During my inspection tour we had long meetings. Vladimir Gazetov, Igor Tjorlo and I tried to explain in a concentrated form to them what needed to be done, but they were unable to ‘step out of their own shadows’. Here I would like to propose one change (grabbing a temporary opportunity to act as a ‘white collar’). I wish the following two points were added to the BID for the first category event:

- 1) the name of the meet director
- 2) the names of at least three experts-parachutists who will participate in the organization of the competition

If anyone feels hurt by my report, I do apologize. If anyone is disappointed by it and by all my ‘paperwork’ regarding the competitions in Cheboksary, I hope they will understand that I just cannot do it another way – that’s me. I can do more in practice than on paper. Life is being lived somewhere else than only on paper and in front of a computer monitor. Our competitions are done by people and for the participants are beautiful just because they are experiencing them at that very moment.

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I thank all the organizers, judges, assistants, my driver, competitors, hotel staff, etc. I would like to thank ALL the people who, finding themselves far away in Russia on the banks of the Volga River and under the circumstances mentioned above, did their best and as much as possible for the competition. Thank you so much for your hard work and for everything beautiful. Congratulations to the winners and many thanks to everyone for every single sport performance in parachuting. Thank you for your generosity and understanding.

Jiri Blaska  
FAI Controller

20 November 2013