

# FLYER'S HANDBOOK

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## **Introduction**

This should only take the first pages,(you can put them at the end when you're done) the important stuff, which you will need tomorrow (assuming you are reading this for the first time on your way -bus, plane- to the festival) follows right away.

So that is why the order of this book is as it is: the main issue is competition day, and how to survive! Keep the book at close hand, until you enter the field, it will guide you through all that is happening without too much stress. Later you can read the rest and find out you should have read it before...

This book is part of a series of three -for the organiser, judge/ field director and flyer-

The three books together can act as checklists, scripts and role descriptions, making it easier for every one participating to know what to do, when and how. It is no prescription and gives no guarantee all will run smoothly, but in my opinion having all this information beforehand will leave much more time for competition itself, and run it in a much more relaxed way.

Combined with the organisers and the judges' handbook it is also meant to "free"

competition as much as possible from last minute changes, from confusion and discussions, from anything that might limit the fun we could have with kiteflying.

All are based on more than 15 years of kite competition experience, as a flyer, a judge (about 70 international events including 6 Euro cups, 5 times World Cup , of which twice as Chief judge) and assistant to organisers (the same level).

Although I mainly draw from my own experience, friends have helped me gaining that experience over the years, and without them, I would not even think about writing something like this.

So a special thanks to Guillemette Brisson-Chavant, Rob Sugarman and Viv Walters. Well you all know, the wind lets your kite fly, friends make *you* fly!

If you have any comments, please let me know, once included other flyers might find them useful too!

Special thanks to Stephen Versteegh, Jean-Charles Desquiens, Richard Pellew, David Morley, Andrew Taylor who commented on previous versions and seriously improved this book!

## **Competition day**

### **The night before**

Meet the opposition and the judges! Local competitors will have a much better idea of local conditions, so find out who is flying on their own patch and buy them a drink. The locals will also be the first to know of any changes to the programme, it might well be their club that is doing the organising. Check the time of the pilot's meeting (it may have changed from the published programme) and then work out how much time you need. It looks paternalistic, it even probably is, but it is called sport kite flying for a reason, and your mental and physical condition will have an influence on the result. Make sur you eat and sleep well and don't forget the alarm. If you can not sleep, read the rest of this chapter, it might help, either tonight or tomorrow! It may even help you to get to sleep...

### **The day before**

Lets hope this is not completely a travelling day! But if you are late and you need something to eat and drink on the field, check first if shops are still open...

Check your material (should not be too cumbersome, since you read the advice in “the week before” and made an inventory list)! Is everything there, nothing broken during travel? If you need to assemble kites or parts of it, now is the time to do it.

## **Competition day**

### **Preparations**

Be there early, of course after a good breakfast! You won't forget your kite bag of course(?) but that small bag with spare parts, or your music?

When you get on to the flying field, first get all your kites set up, then -if you brought one- your tent/cabana/shelter. The reason for this is that you should always work on the basis that there may be a short notice change to the programme and your discipline will be the first event and you'll be the first flyer. There's nothing like a short notice change to induce panic in the competitors, make sure you are not one of those panicking!! Then have a look around at the conditions and see what everyone else is flying. However at this point a note of caution is required, do not assume too much from what everyone else is flying. Different flyers set up their kites in ways to suit their own flying style, and just because someone is happily flying in 4 km/h of wind a kite which looks exactly like the one you fly,

don't assume that it is the best set up for you. This counts for double when that other flyer is a sponsored flyer (see why it was worth meeting the opposition last night?). Sponsored flyers are sponsored because they are at the top of their class, this means they have more experience and can handle a wider wind range. They also have access to the latest modifications by the manufacturers that may not be available to anyone else.

So, find some air-space and put your own choice of kite up. Start mapping the sky and the flying field, look for where the turbulence is and what is causing it, local conditions might result in a twist in the wind so the centre of the window at 70% is different to that at ground level, does the flying field slope to give you a false horizon. (see also “Tips”) Try the difficult parts of your figures and your routines, overpowered? Underpowered? Try the next kite up or down, any better?

By now you'll have warmed up and you should be close to Pilot's Meeting time, so bring your kite down and wind your lines in. Keep all your kites together along with the rest of your kit, firstly it will help avoid losing things and secondly a bigger pile of kit is less likely to be trampled on. Make sure all the line sets you think you might use have straps/handles on, you don't want to be scrabbling around trying

to swap straps from one set to another in your official set-up period.

### **Briefing**

Be on time for the pilots' meeting! At the back of the book is a complete schedule of that first pilots meeting!

It is the same as the one in the "Judge's Handbook" ! Added are a few comments to point out what you should not forget. Just flip through it during the meeting, and neither you nor the Chief Judge will miss anything.

### **Flight Order**

Once the Chief Judge has read the flight order have a good look at your fellow competitors! Especially at the ones that precede you. It is the best way later to check if you are on time.. Better to take notes!

Before you go to stage-in check wind direction and force. Monitor changes

Did you hand in your music, name on it, number to play, cued?

Be there on time! It will give you the time to prepare your equipment.

### **Ground crew**

If the system works then the competitor now leaving the field will go to the same stage-in/-out area you are going to use, and s/he/they will be **your ground crew**. You now have at least 9 minutes, before you are on yourself! Decide which kites to use. Give instruction to your ground crew, explain clearly how to put any air brakes on or how to get them off, any special bridle attachment your kite make have;

hand signals (handy standard..)

both hands up (even if the kite is flying!)  
YOU NEED HELP

left or right hand to the side: left or right wing/side of the kite has problems

both hands waving low in front of you: no help needed anymore

a broken line will be clear to your ground crew! S/he should start unrolling the *lines* immediately, starting at the place where the kite went down

kite changes

give the order in which you will change your kite during setup (light to heavy)

make sure your ground crew knows you are going to change kites between C.'s and routine, if you do!

#### spare parts

spreaders (top/bottom), stand off, tape etc. a wing tube is very hard to replace [in 45 seconds], unless you have a very special kite with, say, zippered leading edges, so replace that before if needed.

#### lines

let the ground crew take a spare set of lines, if one line breaks, change both. Don't forget a ground hook/pin for the ground crew.

Prepare the kites you are going to use.

It is not really necessary to roll out lines in stage-in, it can easily be done in not more than 20 seconds on the field.

Don't forget a ground hook.

### **Stage in**

Be there early! This means that even if you had time for another test fly before your turn in the arena, you must still keep an eye and ear on what is going on in the arena. When you go into stage-in make sure you are not crowding or otherwise obstructing the

competitor who is about to go into the arena. They may have a spare line set laid out, make sure you do not lay your lines over theirs, just remember that one day it could be you rushing back to stage-in to grab your spare lines with only seconds to spare. Take all the kites you might need into the stage-in area. If the wind has been fairly constant all day then go for your first choice and then one that will cover the most likely wind change. If the wind has been variable all day, take your whole range. Prepare kites and lines on the edge of stage-in. Then go back to the end of your lines and take a few moments to focus. Ignore the person flying in the arena, what or how they are flying is not important to you now, concentrate on what you are going to do.

By now the competitor on the field will be almost through the routine. Watch the Pit Boss or FD.

### **Flying**

#### entrance

The field director will invite you into the arena; do not move into the arena until invited. Get your ground crew to place your first choice kite on the yellow boundary at the centre of the window. Mark where you are standing, it is best to use a jumper rather than a ground stake as it is easier to see and less likely to

trip you up. This mark shows the limit of how far forward you can go. You don't need a ground stake whilst you're flying so leave it somewhere where you can't trip over it. Ground stakes have a nasty habit of falling out of their sheaths at the worst possible time. Take off and fly around, try some sharp manoeuvres and some landings. For figures, work through your entries for each of the figures and where you want to be. If the figure has a landing or a stall, try a couple. For routines, run through the first few moves, your opening is key to making the judges take notice. If there is a bumpy patch of air somewhere that is right where you want to execute a strategic move, at least you will know it and can compensate for it. Are you happy with your choice of kite? If not then now is the time to change. You only have a limited warm-up period and any change in kite will require a short period for you to adjust to it. Generally if you feel slightly overpowered in the gusts you have probably got the right choice. Adrenaline and deep concentration will keep you going, and anyway you'll only be flying for about 7 minutes. It will only hurt afterwards by which time you won't care!

### **the best place**

simple, almost always the best place is in the middle of the field! Even if the FD is standing

somewhere else. If the wind blows diagonally over the field it might be handy to go forward a few meters.

If your routine starts with a really fierce start it might again be wise to go a few meters forward, but check the yellow and red lines.

### **Calls**

Do not forget that the Field Director will need information from you. Are you going to reverse a figure? Don't wait to be asked, they may forget and it is not their responsibility to ask you. Do you want a wind check? Do you want a minimum time call? These are things to remember and decide upon when you were sat focussing in the stage-in area.

Finally the Field Director will make the call that you were both dreading and looking forward to....**15 seconds**, which means you have 15 seconds left to start. Get yourself in position, take a deep breath, just don't forget to shout "IN".

### **FIELD DIRECTOR'S calls**

**IN** when you are to late to call in yourselves! START FLYING!

**OUT** when you fly too long and did not call out yourselves...

Time calls:

these time calls by the FD will give you

**THE TIME LEFT** (for set-up *and* routine!)

S/he will give you at least warnings for:

**one minute** ;

**30 seconds**;

**15 seconds.**

(or: **you may start, 15 seconds left**)

In the routine also for

**minimum time**

(at which time is your last opportunity to ask for a wind check, if you do it immediately!)

You can ask the FD for other time calls, but usually that is not necessary.

**[45 seconds**

if you crashed after minimum time and your kite still is not under control (on the ground)] [does not apply, according to current (20060801) rule book.]

Wind check calls:

**O.K.** If the wind is between limits

**BREAK** If the wind is outside limits

It is **your** choice to stop or fly if wind is not right and FD has called Break!

Other calls:

**[STOP** If you had a crash within minimum time and used more than 45 seconds to start, **stop immediately!**]

[obsolete within current rules -2006/11!]

**STOP** if there is a dangerous situation, **stop immediately!**

**YOUR calls**

**IN** **ANY** time you start a compulsory or a (ballet-)routine!

**OUT** **ANY** time you finish a compulsory or a routine!

No confusion possible if you do this always, and always **LOUD!**

**TIME** asks for a time call, you will get your **time left!**

**WIND CHECK** ask for a wind check. Will take the FD at least 15 seconds to do, so wait at least that long to aks again! Not possible after minimum time!

**RECESS** if you stop flying after a "BREAK" by the FD. NOT mandatory, but it



makes things clear to FD and judges.

**STOP** if you stop flying because you think flying is too dangerous. You will have to explain this to the Head Judge immediately!

### **wind check**

A wind check will take 10 seconds, and some time to give you the result. The FD will give you "OK" or "Break". It is your choice to fly after "Break". Think about the problem before you enter the field. You had a look at the wind changes before you entered Stage-in, didn't you, so you should have an idea about the risks. If you asked for two or more wind checks (with reason!) and the wind is bad on your last one, it is better to stop, since you had problems within minimum time, and almost no opportunity to show a better performance.

### **music**

It might be wise to have music for low wind and high wind, but make sure then they are marked different (use "A"; "B"; "C" etc.) than track numbers, and the markings are readable and understandable for the sound engineer! Hand in the right ones.

### **CHECK IT!**

Is your name -very visible- on it  
Is the A or B for wind speed on it  
Is the number the sound engineer has to play on it, readable  
Is the tape cued

### **Stage out**

Firstly, never, EVER, take off again once you've landed and called "out". You may be closer to a boundary than you think, your line may be within one strand of breaking, you could trip over your marker.

If the ground crew is holding your kite, make sure you don't hinder the next competitor with your kite and lines.

Good alternative solution: fly back BUT STAY WITHIN THE RED BOUNDARY WHILE FLYING; land; put your lines down in stage out, and get your kite in. Take your ground stakes, and whatever you used as markers. Let the ground crew take back spare parts and other kites.

Recover all your spare kites and gear, then go and thank your ground crew. Take all your gear back to your base on the field. You will probably have to take a turn in ground crewing (unless you've already done your turn before flying) so grab a drink, food, coat etc and make your way back to the stage-in area.

## Ground crew

Now it is your turn to “ground crew”  
If you are new to competing the nightmare ground crewing scenario is to have to crew for an experienced competitor who is in the running for an overall win. These are the guys who will take seven kites, three different sorts of brakes and three sets of line into the arena and then change kites in the 90 seconds between figures and freestyle routines. DON'T PANIC!! The principles are just the same as when you flew. Get them to show you how they want the brakes attached or the bridle connection made. Try it a couple of times whilst they are with you and make sure they are happy with how you've done it. Ask them where they are going to land for when they want a kite changed, or indeed where a likely crash might be when they could need your assistance. Check what their hand signals mean, if in doubt, ask again. Take spare parts and lines. Ask what will be the place where you wait on the field, usually straight downwind from the pilot. And RUN when necessary!

## Next competition

Well, you have to do it all over again!  
Check your kites.

Be in time for the briefing.  
Did you hand in your music, name on it, number to play, cued?  
Etc.

## Debriefing

Essential! *The* time to improve future competition based on what happened -and what not-. To learn more about your performance and “teach” organiser, chief judge and all other officials. The best opportunity to get real information about your flying, scores etc. either during debriefing, or while talking with judges and other flyers afterwards.

(Talk to more than one judge. Judges are only human -contrary to popular opinion- and are entitled to have different views, in fact it is expected that they will have).

## Protests

Write it down, short and systematically, and hand it over to the head judge of the discipline, or to the Chief judge in other cases. Never step into the field *during* competition. If you think it is essential you fly again, for whatever reason, wait for the “OUT” of the last competitor and go to the Field Director immediately. (s/he will keep the judges on the

field if necessary). Have your protest ready and written down, if not the Head judge only may forgive you if you are right... Ask for a written reply, at least from the Chief Judge, it will then be easier to get a reply from the sanctioning body later!

### **The night before the day after**

Never put a broken or damage kite away. If you can't fix it on the field make it a priority to fix it when you get home (/camping/hotel). Make it a rule not to arrive on the flying field with a kite or piece of equipment that needs repair.

Exchange contact details with other flyers, thank the organisers and officials, and finally have a last look around where you've been based on the field during the event and make sure you've cleared up any rubbish

Of course you should go to that beach BBQ tonight! It will be one of the better parts of competition and festival. But check a few things: are your kites save, will they be there tomorrow (at a place you remember..); will you be awake -enough- tomorrow for the next competition; can you get to the hotel that late.

Enjoy!

### **Scores**

Yes, they are too low. Well, usually they are not, and they are also not that interesting either!

Before you comment on scores, or are going to ask a judge about your score, try to get the following information:

Did you rank below somebody who flew better, and above somebody who flew worse? Then the score does not matter that much, does it?! Did the judge who gave you that low score had you ranked the same, or nearly the same as the end-ranking? Then his or her score does not matter that much, does it?!

If the judge you are going to ask about his or her score gave a very low score, is there also a judge who gave you a very high score (both compared to the average score you got)? Then ask both what they thought about your flying, ask the judge with the "low" score what you can improve, the one with the "high" score what your strong points are. After that the scores don't matter that much, do they?! If all this information about scores is not available ask the Chief Judge.

In general, don't focus on scores, focus on getting very useful information about your flying from those very experienced observers: the judges!

## Preparations

### The day before

Equipment time!

Like they go over a jet before take-off, check your all kites, lines, handles; again.. Check if every part you will need is there, check the tape again of those parts that get loose all the time, doing that on a beach means you are sticking sand, not parts.

It is all obvious, but also often forgotten! Check the field and take a pair of shoes or boots to fit the terrain.

Check the weather. Not just to see what kite you might need but, just as important, what kind of clothes and shelter you will need! And maybe sun blocker cream?

Check the back-pack with food and drink, tomorrow might be hot, cold, wet, dry, long.

### The week before

Check your gear **now!**

Check it against your inventory list, which includes the spare parts of course!

Get all your kites out and check them. Why at least a week before? Because then you've got time to buy any parts you need. Repair any holes, look for split ferrules, cracked spars, damaged fittings such as knocks and sail grabbers, worn and chafed bridles

(incidentally, are your bridles on the correct settings, on both sides?). Anything that looks remotely damaged should be replaced. Then when you've done that, go to your nearest open space and get ALL your lines out including spares and the ones you think you won't need. Run the lines out, check them for abrasions and little nicks, get the twists out. Then stake one end and make sure they are balanced. The day of the event is most definitely NOT the time to be doing any of this, you'll be too busy and too pre-occupied with other things!

Packing things the right way, sounds easy. Make sure the rods are safe. Packing them all in one stiff bundle might do more harm than good! If you travel by bus realize your kite bag might end up below a pile of hard-cased suitcase-cases! Sometimes completely dismantled kites in a short bag, that you can keep with you, might be better. (might work better on a plane too, as standard luggage)

Take a last look at the information you got, or that is available on the web, to be sure of figures, guideline changes, the way to the field, hotel, addresses etc. A week before it is still possible to ask questions, and get the answers in time.

Check your music.

The best medium to have your music on is two media! There might be a mp3/wma (etc.) player, or a cassette deck, there usually is a cd

player. No risk with a 5 min. cassette with only your music on both sides, or with a cd with just one piece on it. (check if the cd you burned will play on another deck than yours, if not ask someone else to burn a cd for you; and check that too! Better save than sorry...) It might be wise to have music for low wind and high wind, but make sure then they are marked different (use "A"; "B"; "C" etc.; save the numbers for track numbers ), and the markings are readable and understandable for the sound engineer! Hand in the right ones.

Take with you all names, addresses, telephone nr. of people you had contact with regarding your subscription, travelling, hotel, people to meet at the competition.

### **Your subscription**

You might have done that months before, but did it arrive? If possible, check before you arrange for travelling. Can you subscribe if you show up? If possible, check before you arrange for travelling.

Check the information you get from the organiser about the start and end time of competition and festival. If demonstrations, flight schools and other non-competition activities are expected make sure you inform the organiser **in time**, which means together with your subscription, or earlier if possible!

As a competitor you are dependent of organisers to have a competition in the first place, the organiser is dependent of your efforts to make the competition/ festival a success. Both should know, as early as possible what is expected. Prepare a sheet with information about yourself, your sponsors, kites, past competition results etc. etc. Send it to them before and hand it over while you are there to the organiser or speaker, they will be very grateful!

### **Practice**

Within the scope of this handbook: practice the figures. They get you a large part of your precision score, so it pays. Ask someone knowledgeable to have a look and give comment  
Practice the start of your ballet, it needs to be right on the cue.

### **Training**

Again within the scope of this handbook: of course you will train your ballet, but be prepared for a situation in which you don't hear the music for 5-10 seconds by training on the rhythm of the music, so you can count the beat long enough to bridge the gap. (this will help to fly your ballet better anyway)

Train all compulsories, especially the ones used the last year in the kind of competitions you want to fly.

## Tips

Want to know what the wind is like?

Look around for single line kites. Lots of delta's and nothing else? Definitely low winds! Only a few Cody's high in the sky (and sand blowing round your knees) NO competition today!

These are the obvious signs, but generally the type and number of single line kites gives a good impression about wind speed, stability and direction, especially higher up. (look for long kite-trains, nothing gives a better indications of different wind directions at different heights!) Check banners for turbulence close to the ground.

If teams are doing competition, as individual flyer look at a few teams to check if they have problems keeping spacing and equal speed, if so (with a reasonably well trained team) the wind is 'bumpy', not very stable. And look at manoeuvres of the flyers before you while in stage-in as a last check on wind speed.

A compulsory with a landing?

If the field is not completely free all around it might be easier to land on one side than on the other. And if the field is not level, land on the highest point, if you are flying in on a low horizontal, it just has to be "low" near the highest point!

At the end of the pilots meeting schedule is a scheme for ground crewing. If the CJ has announced that this is the system to be used make sure you know the ones that you will assist as well as the ones that will assist you! If it is not clear ask the CJ to read the flight order again. If you already made your own arrangements make sure that does not conflict with any other system.

Check the signals again.

You like it so far and want to be invited (again)? Then give demonstrations on the kite festival that runs next to the competition (a very common situation) to please the organiser, just as much as the public! Look around for 'master classes', introduction flights, workshops. Go out and assist an hour or so (and learn too). Nothing wrong in making friends, and there is only a very small change you will educate someone who will beat you later...

Get some leading notes or tones 5 - 10 seconds before the start of your music (on your tape or cd) it will help you in getting the "IN" and start right, and will prevent losing the first second(s) of your music. It does not count as 'ballet' time if it are clearly just a few notes. Still **do** call "IN" at the right time!

Don't use the very last seconds of maximum time for you ballet. Although you might be able to prove afterwards your music was not too long, it will still influence your score if you go over maximum time, because the cd player was a bit quick (a 1% difference, either in your or the organiser's machine means 2 seconds on 3 minutes)

If your music starts -very- soft, change it! Get the level up a bit to be sure not only you but also the judges will hear it. Even with a 'leading note' this will be better.

There are now many (free) computer programs that lets you edit music, or make changes in level, speed and other properties. Use them to your advantage.

Train your ballet a few times with somebody behind you looking, but without hearing the music. If your ballet fails to show rhythm, or fails to suggests cues there is something wrong, in either your flying or your ballet (I do hope not, but maybe even in both...)

## Appendices

### Schedule first pilot's meeting

### Compulsory book

see below, rules.

### Rules

(current rules and compulsories, as well as latest additions can be found on [www.worldsportkite.com](http://www.worldsportkite.com) (August 2006) contact your kite association if in doubt; contact the chief judge and/or organiser of a competition for possible changes and different compulsories. In time, changes are final at least 30 days before competition starts.

### Field set-up

This is a copy (separate file) of the drawing from the organisers handbook. The real set-up might look very different. But there will always be red lines, sound system etc. You might use this (better: the copy you made...) to make notes!

## NOTES

(any tips? Mail them to me, they might help other flyers!)



## NOTES