

Hi Chris,

I am writing this letter as a member of the BHPA, in the hope that you, as my CIVL delegate, can ensure that this message is communicated to all CIVL members/delegates who are involved in the vote on the wings used in Cat 1 competitions.

For those delegates that do not know me, I am Mike Cavanagh, managing director/part owner of Ozone Gliders Ltd, full time pilot and part time competition pilot. For those of you that do not know the history of Ozone, we have always been pro serial class in Cat 1 competitions as we know that is a guaranteed way of improving safety in any competition. In my position at Ozone, I was the proposer of the serial class proposal that was decided upon and accepted as a policy by the PMA (Paraglider Manufacturers' Association).

However Ozone are not just a Serial Class manufacturer (Serial Class being any wing certified in the EN A to D categories) we also sell the un-certified Open Class wings, the latest being the R10 which has been the most popular Open Class wing during 2010 and has been piloted on the majority of the podiums in 2010, including the Cat 1 Europeans.

Because Ozone are strongly involved in Open Class and Serial wings I feel in a good position to write this message as I feel that I am coming at this from purely a safety and fairness angle.

I felt inclined to write this as I read Martin Scheels recent email "Safety in FAI Cat 1 PG competitions" with some incredulity - what he is writing is based on biased opinions and incorrect assumptions that he is trying to pass off as fact to "support" his apparently very biased position which seems to be very anti-serial class.

I would like to point out that there are several very strong and compelling reasons for supporting Serial Class. These are simple:

SAFETY, Fairness and Responsibility!

SAFETY

This one is a "no brainer", (as we say in English) and any pilot/official who argues that open class wings are safer than Serial class wings are deluding themselves (and trying to delude others in suggesting anything different). For anyone to say that Open Class wings are safer than EN standard certified wings makes a mockery of the whole idea of the safety in our sport being governed by these carefully thought out EN standards.

The EN A to D certifications were designed to make safe gliders, with predictable results to the expected flying and "non-flying" situations that pilots will always face. Most, if not all, open class wings are unpredictable and certainly un-certifiable to the EN standard. This means that any certified (EN A-D wing) would be inherently safer than an Open Class wing for any pilot, expert or otherwise. This is not debatable, it is general fact.

On Serial Class wings, unfortunate pilots in a competition may still have accidents, may be more or less than previously, and those will always be hard to totally remove from our sport, as pilots will always make mistakes and unfortunately our mistakes can be unforgiving, **but using EN D wings instead of Open class wings helps remove/reduce the chance of the wing in a collapsed situation from being the cause of that accident.**

FAIRNESS

In all competitions you want everything to be as fair as possible. Including Open Class wings in a Cat 1 competition is not fair for two reasons...

Firstly, in the past, the best open class wings were not available to all pilots. For example when Advance had the best wing it was only available to a few specially selected pilots (incidentally this was done

because they were concerned that not all pilots were capable of flying such wings (CIVL should take note of such a manufacturer's concerns)) - this meant the majority of the pilots could not get the best wing and were therefore at a distinct disadvantage. Martin Scheel's proposal will not change this potential elitism that a manufacturer can create in a Cat 1 competition by controlling the supply of its open class wings.

Secondly, the Cat 1 competitions are designed to be all inclusive to ensure wide participation from countries that are not just the big paragliding areas. This means that FAI Cat 1 competitions follow an "Olympic" ideal of inclusion, but this has the adverse effect of meaning that the participants are of wildly differing abilities. That is OK as the aim is to find the best, but it is unfair, and I would add, very irresponsible of CIVL, to force these pilots of differing abilities to have to compete on Open Class wings (that are more dangerous and harder to fly) in order to have a chance of being competitive. Again, the inclusion of Open Class wings is creating an unfair elitism in the competition.

Serial Class (like EN D) wings are an ideal way of ensuring that a Cat 1 competition is played on a much more level playing field, with no advantage gained through the elitism that the inclusion of open class wings creates.

RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility seems to have been overlooked. I do wonder what would happen if the worst did happen in a competition and the family had a lawyer looking for serious compensation. CIVL already know they have to address safety in Cat 1 competition, and have been making good changes, but they have to be seen to be doing their utmost to look after the pilots who are going to compete under the rules they set. I think it is bordering on the negligent if CIVL delegates do not properly address the type of wings flown in Cat 1 competitions when it is blatantly obvious that one wing type (Serial Class) is safer than an Open Class wing and they know that their selection criteria for pilots does mean that Cat 1 competitions have a wide range of pilot abilities. **CIVL delegates cannot be blamed for pilot mistakes, but CIVL delegates can be blamed for encouraging pilots to fly a wing that is beyond their ability.**

To add to that pressure, CIVL delegates cannot ignore the fact that the PMA, as the only manufacturers association with wide affiliation, wants the Cat 1 comps to be on Serial Class (max en D) wings because they know these wings are inherently safer for the type of pilot in a Cat 1 competition.

I also understand that a lot or most countries pilots' associations are keen to go Serial Class. I know that Martin's message mentions the fact that some countries tried to go serial class in the past, but came back to being open class and he misleadingly tries to suggest that this was because the serial wings were less safe than open class wing. Going back to my first point on safety - we all know that a serial wing is safer than an open class wing. This is fact, not a delusion. The main reason why these countries did not remain Serial Class is because they got no backing from CIVL as CIVL kept the main Cat 1 competitions Open class. CIVL's lack of decisiveness in recognising Serial Class as the safest and fairest platform for Cat 1 competitions is responsible for these countries having to back-track after making a brave step forward for the safety of the sport.

Martin's OCTWG proposal just "papers over some of the cracks" of using Open Class wings, moreover, he uses his position to attack a Serial Class proposal. To me that shows a lack of direction and objectivity to his whole report. CIVL need to take full responsibility for its cat 1 competitors to give them a higher chance of being SAFER in the Cat 1 competitions and to have a FAIRER playing field. This can only be done by deciding on Serial Class instead of Open Class.

What is there to lose in going serial class in Cat 1?

"Not a lot to lose" is the responsible position to take. The competition will take place and the best pilot/team in the competition will win. It should be safer and fairer! Any accidents are more likely to be down to pilot decision than being because pilots were encouraged/told by the rules to fly a wing that is beyond them.

What happens to Open Class/Innovation?

It is argued that going Serial Class in cat 1 comps will reduce innovation in our sport. Well, I can say from Ozone's point of view that will never happen. We will always be looking to innovate to make our wings better in safety and performance. Any company looking to the future and interested in looking after its pilots will innovate.

If CIVL are worried about Open Class/Innovation disappearing then they should still support Open Class in Cat 2 competitions like the PWC, where there is pilot selection criteria designed to ensure the pilots are only from the elite and more capable of flying an Open Class wing. The PMA support Open Class in the PWC, Cat 2 type, competition.

You could actually say that going Serial Class could be better for innovation for our pilots. Currently some manufacturers (like Nova) will not make Open Class wings because they see them as too dangerous (again CIVL delegates should pay attention to that fact). Cat 1 comps going Serial Class may encourage more innovation and development as more manufacturers become involved, including those that would never be involved with Open Class competitions.

How are wings to be checked for compliance?

It should be no problem to ensure that manufacturers supply required measurements, perhaps additionally "certified" by a test centre as being correct, for the use of checkers at the competition. I also believe that some severe penalties for cheating will help police this. If a pilot cheats, then the whole team gets chucked out of the competition - maybe banned for several years.

When to introduce serial class in Cat 1 comps? What about the Worlds in Piedrahita?

I would hope that CIVL make Cat 1 competitions Serial Class as soon as possible, but even so, I can understand that CIVL needs to act responsibly. **Unfortunately, I think it could be seen as irresponsible to make any changes for Piedrahita. Whether going for Martin's proposal or Serial Class it will put too much pressure on pilots and manufacturers to have good wings ready on time.** You do not want manufacturers rushing to design new wings, nor do you want pilots rushing to choose what they should fly. **It would also be bad to delay making the decision to go Serial Class until 2012.**

I would say that it is best for CIVL, in this meeting, to decide now, to go serial class for Cat 1 comps in 2012 - so the Europeans can be the first test bed, rather than the Worlds. This gives both manufacturers and pilots the time to prepare. And to leave the Worlds in Piedrahita as they are, maybe with the addition of Martin's suggestion to have pilots sign to show they have relevant experience on the wing they are going to fly.

I would just add, as I am sure that some people may see my position at Ozone could mean that my views on timings could be biased, but I can assure you my position at Ozone has no bearing on this matter. Please believe me when I write what I write, as I do so with the knowledge that Ozone is well prepared whether the Worlds goes Serial Class or remains Open Class, even with the additional difficulties Martin's changes would make. To me all these decisions have to be taken for the sake of safety and fairness in our sport, and as a pilot that is all I can ask of CIVL to do too.

I hope all of the above makes sense and I hope that it aids the decision process in your meeting.

Cheers,
Mike

Mike Cavanagh
OZONE
www.flyozone.com