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Letter to the CIVL delegates of the
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Paraglider Manufacturers
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subject:

PMA position re. "certified gliders only in FAI cat.1 competitions"

In the last PMA AGM (annual general meeting) in St. Hilaire Sept.16 2010 the subject how to improve the safety of paragliders which are flown in FAI cat.1 competition has been discussed. After an extensive discussion the PMA AGM came to the following conclusion:

Voting on PMA Proposal for FAI cat.1 competitions (World- and Continental Championships):

The PMA believe that from the material point of view a significant way to improve safety in FAI cat 1 competitions is to restrict them to EN – D gliders. Open class gliders have their place in competitions but FAI Cat 1 is not that place. Voting result: pro 16, against 2, abstentions 3

Summary of the reasons:

EN-926/1 load test:

There is no reason to change the requirements for a load test according to EN-926/1 to lower limits for competition gliders. The addition to ask for a calculated line strength test of new lines of 23 G for all lower lines (mid and top lines accordingly) additionally to the calculated 14 G line strength test after the 5000 times line bending test makes sense to avoid accidents due to unwanted line length and trim changes. The CIVL working group has proposed this addition and the PMA agrees to it. Perhaps the WG 6 will decide to include this addition into the next revision of EN-926/1 which will be due in 2011.

EN-926/2 flight test:

All flight testing following the EN-926/2 flight test standard has been designed in a way, that the test pilot is only a tool who must execute the test maneuvers like a robot following exactly the description in the EN-standard. Provided different test pilots have the same flying weight all results of the maneuvers will be the same. The test pilot only is allowed to interfere and take action after the maneuver has been executed in case it is necessary for his/her own safety to avoid the crash of the glider.

To ask for "EN-testing with test pilot interference allowed" is in conflict with the idea of an EN-standard. Pilot reaction after a maneuver to collapse a glider has been introduced cannot be standardized and therefore never be the base of a new class in the existing EN-926 standard. It is rather a test of the skills of a test pilot, but a test of the gliders safety. It could be compared to car crash testing and allowing the crash test dummy to steer to avoid the obstacle. Anyone of the professional test pilots can make an unsafe glider look benign in such a situation, but a less skilled pilot who will fly such a glider is in danger and will have problems with the behavior of the glider. Trying to create a new EN-class E for competition gliders based on EN-testing with "test pilot interference allowed" will make many consumer pilots believe that these gliders are safer now compared to the current competition gliders, because they think they are tested and even in

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accordance with an EN-standard. This is completely misleading because the opposite will be the case and it will be harmful for the image of the sport of paragliding in the public as well and is bound to create more accidents but less, because the consumer pilots will be misled to believe that these gliders are safer now and more pilots will fly them.

Competition with EN-certified paragliders:

On top of being more safe the competition using paragliders which are tested following the existing EN-926/2 D standard will provide a level playing field and a more fair competition.

The argument, that the conformity of these gliders with the tested specimen cannot be controlled is nonsense. There are hundreds of persons worldwide who check the conformity of paragliders with the certified and tested specimen every day in production and in the maintenance check. The staff and professional test pilots of the CIVL approved testing laboratories have these skills anyway and could even test fly the winning gliders and other gliders randomly after and during a FAI cat.1 competition.

If CIVL really is asking for safer paragliders to be flown in FAI cat1 competitions, then in the eyes of the Paraglider Manufacturers Association the only way to go is to restrict these competitions to gliders which are tested following the existing EN-926 standard.

Best regards

Hans Bausenwein
CEO Paraglider Manufacturers Association