

January 3rd, 2023

RIGHT OF REPLY

Dear Alberto,

In the name of the ISC Bureau, I am writing to you and your committee regarding the report to the ISC Plenary of the Canopy Piloting Committee.

Almost four pages of your report out of five in total are dedicated to the 2022 World Games. Unfortunately, not only is the content inaccurate, but it also contains hearsay and judgmental comments about certain individuals. It also fails to describe the reality of the situation that FAI was faced with from the beginning of 2022 and the work carried out from then to ensure that the competition could go ahead. At times it was touch and go.

This is a right of reply necessary to set the records straight. It will be added as an Annex to the Agenda.

What happened in the years preceding 2022 are recorded through a WG liaison officer written report in 2019 and the minutes of the FAI Plenary Meetings 2020, 2021 and 2022. Other than 2019, when several technical details were highlighted, these reports mostly focused on competitor selection and competition rules.

In the absence of a written report in 2022 and considering that the Organiser had expressed serious concern to FAI about the lack of readiness of the event, I requested a status report from you and Exi Hoenle while in Bucarest. This was provided on January 27th but did not reflect the concern that the Organiser highlighted, nor did it give any details of what was really happening or who was in control.

In addition to the concerns raised by the Organiser, on January 25th I received a long email from Albert Berchtold, CEO of the USPA, raising serious concerns about the site, the proposed positioning of the pond and the environment. He proposed to help scout out another site, although rather late in the day to do so. This was shared with both you and Exi on the same day and on 27th January, the ISC Bureau gave Albert an OK to go ahead with this, asking him to work with Exi, Jasper Williams as proposed Technical Course Director, and Marylou Laughlin, nominated Meet Director (although unnamed in your report).

Nothing further occurred to satisfy the concerns expressed by the Organiser who, on February 22nd, arranged a Zoom meeting which was attended by several FAI officials, Exi as ISC WG liaison officer, Marylou and me. No solutions were forthcoming from the liaison officer so towards the end of the meeting Marylou Laughlin offered to contact Larry Hill with the view of pulling together all the necessary components to be able to run the competition. This was gratefully accepted by the Organiser.

Unfortunately, the search for an alternative site was unsuccessful so, concerned about safety and potential litigation, the Secretary General of the FAI and I agreed that an additional site visit was necessary. Although you state the contrary in your report, this was not requested by Marylou, it was at our request but arranged by her. It took place on March 3rd, with Ian Bobo and Marylou on site plus Albert, Jasper and Greg Windmiller via phone.

The visit led to some changes in the positioning of different elements of the competition site and enabled Marylou to set up a working relationship with different players in Birmingham. It also resulted in a proposal that all competitors should receive, together with their official invitations, detailed information about the venue highlighting the fact that the site was challenging. This was a safety measure to ensure every competitor was aware of the environment, so different from our regular competition sites which, as you know, are regular, well vetted drop zones.

You indicate in your report that from nomination, the Meet Director started to make "unpredictable decisions and to disregard the advice of the CP Committee", despite being a long serving member/adviser herself. Nothing could be further from the truth. Every action was discussed with the FAI, the BOC and myself and often carried out with current members of the CP committee. I kept you up to speed with what was happening either by copying you in on emails and on at least two occasions by phone. The long list of concerns raised with your committee and expressed in an email dated May 22nd, received a detailed response. This should have allayed your concerns and demonstrated that the situation was under control. It also highlighted the need for teamwork and constructive cooperation.

You state in your report that the previous team was dismissed, referring I suppose to Exi and Jasper. That was not the case.

I was contacted by Jasper Williams in early March asking for support to obtain payment for services rendered by him for the World Games but although I tried, I was unable to help as neither the organiser nor FAI had received or approved any quote or approved any work on which to base payment. Although he was always considered to be the right person for the job and could have been integrated into the team pulled together within the package established by Larry Hill, he chose to resign from the position on March 7th. Following this, he submitted a bill to ISC for participation in Zoom meetings but since this was not budgeted nor had been requested previously, it could not be paid either.

I spoke with Exi on March 11th explaining the urgent need to have a person working with the BOC in the USA and that we would nominate Marylou as the local ISC liaison officer (IBD 14/3). In April, I again reached out to him to explain that to avoid confrontation, confusion and to ensure team leadership, it was important that there should be only one point of contact for ISC. An IBD was prepared to recognise Marylou in that role and was to be issued on April 22nd. At his request, it was withheld and on April 27th, he chose to step down from the position.

The complete package that Larry Hill pulled together for us included the use of the Omniskore scoring system. This was non-negotiable even though I did try and convince him to continue to work with Namespace Technologies with whom I also spoke. Knowing that the system had already been presented for approval once and was to be tested again in May 2022, in time for the WG, the Bureau issued an IBD dated March 14th which anticipated the decision, authorising the use of Omniskore for the WG and consequently allowing the work with Larry to continue.

The IBD also agreed to increase the budget for officials travel to the WG from 4000€ to 8000€ since it became apparent that no realistic provisions had been made for FAI expenses. Unfortunately, we vastly exceeded that amount, taking over 13800€ from our 2022 budget even though both Commissions concerned had been requested to keep costs as low as possible. The latter was highlighted to you in exchanges initiated from March 22nd with Bjorn Korth, the Chief Judge, on which both Exi and you were copied.

Some difficulties were encountered with Omniskore, partly linked to different versions of the competition rules being available which led to confusion but also due to the WG scoring provider, Swiss Timing, who had total control over what was done with the results. These have been explained in the report received from Ted Wagner.

Larry's team also included Andrew du Toit who was able to continue working on his project and the fact that it was not used was not based on any decision by the Meet Director as you indicate in your report, but due to circumstances on site that are well explained in the Liaison Officer report.

Your report indicates that safety measures and some legal obligations such as ensuring that all the competitors had the FAA required Pro-rating or equivalent had raised red flags that you (the CP Committee) had been working hard to avoid. You also report that the Meet Director was "scaring everybody".

Working in an environment that had not only never been used for Airsports but also, in the opinion of everyone involved, was challenging, required careful preparation and a full risk assessment for the benefit of both the competitors and the organisers. We were lucky enough to benefit from the pro-bono assistance of Michael Kattrup Lassen from ASG who handled all safety and emergency response issues and more importantly secured the airspace which had not been done previously. We should not be hiding such important matters from future organisers and should integrate a full risk assessment in any event we are responsible for as would apply for any Air Show .

I will not go into what took place on site, I was not there, and it is fully reported in the Liaison Officer report. There will also be several people who were present in Birmingham at the Plenary Meeting who will be able to answer any questions.

The overall result of the 2022 World Games Canopy Piloting was satisfactory, thanks to the hard work of many contributors over the last few years and in particular the team set up in March, less than five months before the start of the event. They managed to pull it off successfully and to the overall satisfaction of the competitors, the BOC and the IWGA.

As you indicate in your report, the participation in the next WG is in question, as it has been following every event since our first participation in 1997. Each edition of the WG has its own selection process and FAI has had the opportunity to show different Airsport disciplines over the years. The next event is no different and the process has been kicked off, unfortunately before we are able to discuss it during the Plenary.

As you say, FAI participation in the World Games has been discussed amongst the Bureau but also at other levels of FAI. From the almost 25 years of participation, it is difficult to say whether there has been any real benefit for FAI other than the enjoyment of the competitors. There has been no visible increase in the number of skydivers or in any other Airsport in the countries where the WG have been held, there has been no major or even lasting media interest, we are no closer to the Olympic dream while neither ISC nor FAI have attracted sponsorship for our participation. This year's event was vastly under budgeted and, as already mentioned, has cost ISC over 13800€. Although it attracted spectators on site, it had no significant media coverage.

Whereas FAI does not want to lose the potential Airsports slot in the World Games, it should not be kept at any cost.

Unanimously, the various players within FAI agree that any future participation must be well prepared, correctly budgeted, and preferably organised with the support of professionals and the country NAC. Several disciplines are being considered from three different Commissions including ISC. Selection will be based on different criteria, but the events will certainly need to stand out, be attractive, and easy to understand by the general public. Unfortunately, we probably won't have an answer before our Plenary.

In your report, you have selectively thanked certain people involved in the World Games but it is important to recognise all the people involved and to thank them all for their hard work and dedication.

I hope this right of reply, covering a number of points raised in your report, and although non exhaustive, clarifies what happened and confirms just how close we were to the event not taking place at all.

On behalf of the ISC Bureau

Gillian Rayner

Elisabet Mikaelsson

Rina Gallo

Gail Bradley

Vera Asquith