

Dear Competitor

One of the competition committee's main tasks is to review and adjust the competition rules each year. In 2023, a change to normal procedure, we asked for inputs to this process before we started. We had over 50 ideas put forward. All of these have been considered along with inputs from directors of competitions during the season and from members of the BGA Executive. The sad and tragic fatal mid-air that occurred during the Hus Bos Challenge Cup has also focussed our minds and will result in some interesting proposals to make our competitions as safe as practicable in future. In addition to adopting many of the ideas that pilots and others put forward in 2024 season, we will start consulting on some major changes that could see the light in 2025.

In this document you will find details of the issues that we considered, our reasoning, and the decisions we have made. All have been approved by the full committee and by the BGA Executive. I do not expect that everyone will agree with all of the decisions, but we have tried hard to deliver our terms of reference to the benefit of the sport and competition scene as a whole. We welcome your feedback. However, unless you identify errors, your suggestions will now go into the pot for 2025.

As I said before, one of the key areas of concern is safety and the behaviour of pilots in the air. I am sure that you agree that we all want to go home with ourselves, and our gliders, in one piece at the end of the competition. I hope that all pilots will engage positively with the safety initiatives coming forward this year.

I wish you all a successful and safe competition season.

Jim White

Chair of the BGA Competitions Committee

Rule Change Proposals 2023/24

The rules sub-group and CC has met seven times during the winter to consider rule changes for the 2024 season. These are the topics discussed, arguments made, outcomes, and proposals where appropriate (Topics are in no particular order). All proposed changes have been approved by the Competitions Committee and the BGA Executive. Numbers reference source of input:

2. Start Calls

The CC had inputs from both pilots and organisers that start calls were no longer necessary and were a burden to both. The CC agree and have dropped rule 5.6.8

4. Unapproved loggers - Item for briefing notes

The CC had an input that an unapproved logger was scored in a 2023 competition. This is already covered in our rules. Organisers will be reminded to apply rule 5.5.1

6. LS8 Neo handicap increase 0.5

The CC had an input that the Neo performance enhancements should result in a handicap increase. The handicap sub-group decided that a small increase to 100.5 was justified.

10. Mandate stealth mode

The CC had a suggestion that the CC should mandate stealth mode to reduce gagging. The CC have considered this before, and the BGA Exec have made it clear that they would not approve if proposed as the CAA would see as safety issue. No change was proposed for 2024 although we shall discuss mandating Flarm for 2025.

15. High energy gliders

Following the Hus Bos fatality, the competition organisation has suggested that the CC find a way to limit high wing loading that results in high thermalling speeds. The CC are not sure that this was the root cause of the collision. Our rules limit wing loading to manufacturer's MAUW or lower already. No change was proposed.

17. More frequencies for chat.

The CC had one pilot input that there were not enough chat frequencies. The two frequencies rule was introduced to allow pilots who are not actively team flying to monitor both, so that they had access to the same information that team pilots were sharing in an attempt to reduce the advantage. The CC did have a year when team flying was banned for fairness reasons. This rule was repealed as the CC received strong feedback that British Team members needed to practise team flying. Our present rule is a compromise which the CC consider should be kept. No change was proposed.

30. WOG as permanent penalty area

The CC had an input that it was not necessary to prohibit Weston on the Green danger area when it was not being used. The CC agree, and the rules do not say it should be. The CC will challenge organisers that put this in their local rules.

32. Penalised pilot won day

The CC had a director input that it was not right that a pilot who infringed airspace should be declared day winner. The CC consider this part of a wider discussion about graduated airspace penalties. See later in the document.

3. Turbo relight wording - should The CC promulgate standard words?

The CC did not feel that turbo relights should be in the main rules but accept they may be a good thing at certain sites. The CC decided to propose acceptable wording for inclusion in local rules. Proposed wording and more discussion needed.

5. PEV and other start rules.

The CC had a few inputs suggesting new rules for starting. Last year The CC decided to wait until the IGC decided their own new rules and consider those for inclusion. The IGC rule now appears to be stable so the CC will consider this again. As this would be a major change, the CC felt it should be flagged well in advance, possibly in the preface to the 2024 rules and consulted on during the 2024 season.

7. PIC responsibility

BGA identified that pilots have attempted to use 'not being properly briefed' as mitigation for infringement of notamed airspace and have asked us to underline responsibility of the PIC. The CC decided to add the following para to rule 5.2.2:

'Whilst the organisation will use all reasonable endeavours to brief pilots on temporary or notamed airspace and navigation warnings, the responsibility for obtaining information necessary for the safe conduct of the flight remains with the Pilot In Command.'

8. Rule re note 2a airspace

The CC have checked the 2023 chart Southern. Note 2 still exists. There is no note 2a. The CC decided to remove the reference from 5.10.4.1

19. Grid procedure

The CC had a request to consider rotating the grid on scrub days. This rule was made to ensure fairness. It is considered that pilots at the back may be disadvantaged. The current rule still works as pilots can always go to the back if they consider being on the front is a disadvantage or too stressful. No change was proposed.

21. Guidance on task design

The CC had an input that the tasks set were dangerous or poor. The CC already gives extensive advice in the Organiser's Guide on task setting (sections 2.7 and 2.8). Additionally, The CC require the organisation to nominate a safety officer and an airspace officer. Together with the director(s) they should be able to avoid setting bad tasks. The CC feel that new rules would not help in this regard. No change was proposed.

24. Need for turbo test during the competition and MOP for FES's

It has been reported that there is a problem with MOP detection with jets and ENL detection with FES's. If the logger is positioned away from the jet it may not record running. Tests, therefore, still need to be performed on a competition day as now. It was

also reported that ENL does not always detect FES's. Note that Rule 5.2.2 requires the pilot to ensure that their logger records engine use at low power settings.

As a rule change to require MOP for FES equipped gliders could require the pilot to install new loggers the CC propose that MOP be required in 2025 following testing and consultation.

29. Finish calls

The CC had an input that finish call requirements were not clear. The requirements for finish calls do not appear in the BGA rules but in the local rules, which are necessarily particular to site. If they are not clear, then pilots should ask for clarification at briefing. No change was proposed.

31. Limited time airspace

One input asked for clarification on the treatment of airspace that may exist for a part of the day only. The CC considers that airspace that exists for, say, only 1 hour should not be prohibited for the whole day. This is an issue for the organisation to consider for each day that the problem arises and brief accordingly. No change was proposed.

35. Kestrel handicap to high

Pilot input that handicap is now too high. Passed to handicap sub-group to consider resulting in no change.

1. Tie breaks

Following the 20M Nationals in 2023 which was tied on points, a member of the rules sub group felt that there should be a tie break system and proposed adding to rule 4.1.1 the following para:

'The National Champion in each class will be the registered pilot who amasses the most points during the competition. In the event of a tie in points, the tied pilot with the fastest time (or handicap speed in handicapped competitions), then furthest distance flown, on the last day will be declared the winner.'

An alternative would be count back i.e. who was winning on the penultimate day and so on. The proposed wording above also deals with a one day event such as the 20s this year.

The other members of the sub group considered that this was such a rare occurrence that the CC did not need a new rule and that tied competitions were still OK. The group agreed to ask the full committee to consider this for 2025.

11. Rules and penalties after land out

The CC had input that it would be useful if turbos and relighting gliders were allowed access to Class D, RMZs, TMZs, and ATZs with necessary permissions whilst returning to base. This would allow expeditious return out of contact with the race itself. The CC propose to add words to this effect in new rule 5.10.8

12.13. 14 Safety issues re dangerous flying and the PSC

The PSC is not often used to deal with dangerous flying. Pilots prefer to address directly pilot to pilot. Also, directors and even the CC receive requests to award penalties directly without the involvement of the PSC first.

The CC considered the role of the PSC going forward and note that in some European competitions they are Pilot Representatives consulted on tasks and other matters as well as safety. The CC decided that the CC could rename the PSC but that widening the role was a much greater change that would require further consultation for consideration during next year for 2025.

The CC do, however, propose to require that non specified dangerous flying penalties shall only be awarded following recommendation by the PSC. Rules 5.1.1 and 7.1 taken together now make it clear that, If the director thinks non-specific hazardous flying penalties are deserved, he will, himself, refer to the PSC first.

16. 23. 27. 28. Finish ring rules and penalties

The CC had various opinions offered on finish ring rules and penalties ranging from 'too severe' to 'not severe enough'.

Our current 50ft loss of speed points rule was created following evidence of bad airmanship and several field landing accidents resulting in damage following low finishes at the finish ring. The CC consider that our present rule is satisfactory. It does not encourage dangerous pull ups at ring height to avoid a large penalty but does mimic the effect of arriving 50ft under a finish line on the airfield boundary. No change was proposed.

22. 26. Low engine starts / low flying

Following an accident at the Juniors, the CC had input that the risk of starting an engine below 1000ft AGL and of inexperienced or reckless pilots attempting to climb away from below 500ft AGL are too high.

On the former, the CC consider that implementing a 1000ft rule could encourage more risky behaviour i.e. trying to climb away at 500ft when the sensible thing to do is to start the engine. On the latter, the CC do have sympathy following this year's evidence however, the CC consider that a hard floor AGL is impossible to police and score. No change was proposed although a higher hard deck near the ARP may be considered in future.

20. 25. Who should be responsible for safety and accident procedures

The Organiser's Guide is quite clear (section 2.5) that the club and the CFI are the responsible authority for the site. The competition and its pilots are guests of the hosting club. The CFI may delegate responsibility to the organisation but must remain in the loop.

The CC propose to require that the club CFI, or his delegate, serves as an officer within the organisation either as Director / deputy director or safety officer. The CC note that pilots fly with the consent of the CFI, which consent may be withdrawn if their flying or other behaviour is considered poor.

18. Further clarification of ATZ rules and penalties

The CC were asked to clarify the rules around ATZs. The CC consider that the rules are very clear both about when ATZs are prohibited and how they (and class D) can be used for landing without penalty. It is for the organisation to decide which ATZs are prohibited. No change was proposed.

34. Treatment and briefing of danger area following Cardington penalties

In 2023 there was a controversy about penalties following a crossing of D206. The organisation had declared that 'active Danger areas' were prohibited for the competition. D206 is classified as 'active' on weekdays in the AIP but the pilots determined retrospectively that it was not being used and argued, therefore, that it was not 'active'.

Our rules already prohibited danger areas marked with a *. D206 is one of very few that are not. The CC considered extending our rule to include all danger areas but felt that this was still a decision for the organiser.

The CC consider that this was a problem of inadequate briefing and decided to advise organisations that they must carefully brief such airspace near the task as penalty if they intend to penalise infringement. No change was proposed.

XX. Airspace penalty structure again.

Every year The CC discuss this topic. Are our airspace penalties too lenient? It needs to be remembered that competition airspace includes both that prohibited in law and additional airspace that is deemed prohibited by the competition organisation. The treatment of airspace and penalties for infringement in the rules is solely about competitive fairness: the rules are designed to prevent pilots who choose to flout either from gaining a competitive advantage.

Choices are:

- 1) No change. The easiest option but does give the CAA and public cause to think that the BGA condones small infringements,
- 2) Adopt the IGC rule of 'land out at point of infringement'. This fixes the perceived problems but is not a consistent penalty. Very severe at, or before, the start (up to 1000 points) but much smaller towards the finish or a land out (potentially just a few points).
- 3) Remove the buffer zone inside airspace. Each, or multiple, infringements of a single piece of penalty airspace would get a 500 point penalty. This solves the perceived problems but whilst severe, remains fair.
With today's in-cockpit navigation equipment pilots can easily set themselves a buffer outside prohibited airspace. There may be an argument for retaining a 50 point buffer vertically inside airspace because of the legal margins of altimeter calibration.

The rules sub-group feels that the CC should adopt (3) above for horizontal infringements but retain the 100ft 50-point buffer for vertical ones because of the potential for altimeter calibration inaccuracy. The CC propose to put this forward for consultation as a potential 2025 change.

XY. Turbo test procedures

The CC are concerned to close a loophole in our present rule that allows pilots to use their turbos tactically to climb above the inversion or cloud base immediately prior to starting. The CC discussed the rules for turbo testing.

The rules sub-group proposed the following new wording for rule 5.22.2:

‘The engine test run will be performed after release from tow and completed no less than five minutes prior to making a start, when directed by the Competition Organisation to test engine run detection and / or as required by pilots to establish engine serviceability.

The maximum engine test run duration is 60 seconds for all propulsion types other than jet turbines where, because of the slow start, ramp up, and shut down procedures, the maximum test duration is 100 seconds.

Pilots are required to do this in a safe manner well clear of other competitors.’

This change was approved.

XZ. Dangerous low flying at the finish

The rules sub-group was alerted to three incidences of dangerous low flying at Juniors competitions. Having reviewed the evidence, the group is agreed that these were clear infringements of the rules and should have been penalised.

It was considered that the CC have well written rules on hazardous low flying.

The respondent suggested a hard deck penalty but, as discussed before, the CC do not consider this practicable.

In the 2023 rules the CC extended rule 1.1.1 to include the words:

‘A key responsibility of the director is to ensure that all of these rules are applied correctly as written.’

No change was proposed.

Directors are encouraged not to bend the rules. To do so makes running competitions more difficult in future as these occurrences are often cited as precedents.

Late Input

The CC was grateful to receive late input from one senior pilot on the following new topics. Where their input cannot be satisfactorily paraphrased it is shown in full preceded with an *:

36. Rating of UK 20M Nationals pilots should be the same as the IGC rule

In International 2 seat competitions both pilots are generally of the same, or similar, high skill. In the UK this is often not the case. Pundits often taken learner second seat pilots and owners often ask pilots to fly them in their own gliders. The rules sub-group do not consider it appropriate or necessary to rate both pilots equally in the UK competition. However, the rule regarding most proficient pilot will be modified to recognise pilot selected for World and Europeans as such for rating.

37. Tasks should be allowed that route through ATZs or near any other prohibited airspace as using control points causes dangerous pinch points.

The rules sub-group do not accept this argument. The submitter was unable or unwilling to provide evidence that this has happened. In the 2022/23 cycle the rules sub-group examined every task set in 2022 competition and found that all but one of those that routed near or through airspace could have been re-tasked at a similar distance in the same general area without doing so, and without significant additional control points.

Furthermore, the rules sub-group felt that routing through airspace, in itself, creates pinch points and risks unnecessary infringements. No change was proposed.

38. Remove CC discretion on British Team Member eligibility

This rule wording was put in to allow the CC to select a suitable team member for international competition if the voting system failed to produce a team. It is also the case that, in extremis, the voting system may select a pilot that is manifestly unsuitable, for a variety of reasons, and that the BGA does not feel appropriate to represent the country. The BGA should have discretion in this.

However, as the CC contains potential team members, the rule will be reworded to say that the BGA Exec has this discretion.

39. Drop the PSC or brief them properly. Allowing the PSC to issue penalties is flawed.

Rule 5.1.2 clearly states that the PSC 'is not empowered to impose penalties'. The rules-group agrees that the PSC does not work very effectively and proposes that its constitution, purpose, and powers be the subject of consultation in the 2024 season. No change was proposed.

40. * Actually enforce the fact that local rules have to be approved. Getting a penalty for flying through Cardington is a great example of local nannying control freaks going unchecked.

Rule 1.3.1 requires that local rules must be approved by the CC and published at least 3 weeks in advance of the competition. All local rules are approved by the CC. No change was proposed.

41. Do not lower handicaps because people complain that they cannot keep up

The submitter was unable to provide examples where this had happened. Handicaps are not changed without good evidence. No change required.

42. * Rule 3.2 is pointless. Very few numbers are as large as practical and very few registration marks under the wings comply with the relevant CAP. The CAA and IGC do not enforce this, nor do UK/EGC/WGC comp organisers, so what is the point of an unenforced/unenforceable rule?

Rule 3.2 does not require competition numbers / trigraphs to be displayed under the wing. Fin numbers, however, should be clearly legible and the organisation will be encouraged to require this to be rectified if a glider fails scrutineering in this regard. A note will be added to the Organiser's Briefing Notes.

43. Adopt the EGC rules for drop zones and launch procedures and release heights

The rules sub-group investigated the EGC2023 local rules that cover release heights etc. and found that they were similar to our own but slightly more complicated. Reviewing our rules however, they found that the requirement to relight if self-launchers that exceed the designated release height by 100ft wished to avoid penalty was unwieldy.

This requirement will be removed from the 2024 rule book. Reference to 'at or below release height' will also be removed to resolve a contradiction in the rules.

44. Where multiple national classes run side by side the heavier classes should not be routinely disadvantaged by launching last.

The rules sub-group agree but do not consider that this can be specified precisely in the rules as launch site circumstances change markedly between clubs. Organisations must be allowed to do what they consider to be the safest. An item to the effect that heavier classes must be treated fairly when the conditions allow will be added to the organiser's briefing notes.

45. * Cloud flying before start. Why must a glider return to below release height and not just below max start height? We are allowed to climb in wave and then start/restart without having to drop below release height!

The rules sub-group considers that this issue has two aspects: fairness and safety.

The CC is required by its Terms of Reference to define rules that 'make competition at all levels fair...' All pilots and gliders are able to fly in wave, but not all pilots will fly in cloud, The current rule prevents those that do gaining a significant advantage prior to starting.

Climbing in wave is performed in clear visibility. Climbing in cloud is performed in nil visibility. The rules sub-group and the safety committee consider that cloud flying in and around the start zone carry's a high risk due to the large number of competitors in that area.

No change was proposed.

46. Change nonsense wording of rule 5.6.6 requiring pilots to 'remain in full visibility of all gliders in the same thermal around the start zone.

The respondent makes the point that this requirement is practically impossible to do. However, the rules sub-group considers that it should remain as a reminder to pilots that congested thermals in the start zone can be dangerous if pilots are undisciplined

and do not fly with regard to the safety of other pilots. 2023 saw one fatal collision in a thermal and the sport does not need more. No change was proposed.

47. Allow cloud flying before starting

See item 45 above.

48. 5.22.1 is a contradiction

The rules sub-group agrees, and the rule will be modified. See item 43 above.

49. Change turn point trigraphs to numbers

The UKs turn points are identified by trigraph not numbers. This is not a matter for the CC to consider.

50. * Restrict entries into Nationals from clubs that refuse to host them

Not considered.

51. * Some gliders are certified “Day VFR” only. These should receive a penalty IAW the penalty structure or the penalty structure changed.

The CC is required to develop rules that ensure that competition is fair, with a level playing field, and is as safe as practicable. It is not the job of the CC, nor the competition organisation, to police the competitors’ compliance with UK air law and regulations. No change to the rules is proposed but the penalty for flying outside C of A limits will be deleted for the reason above.

52. Ensure that the rules are abided by and not changed during competitions or during the season.

The 2023 rule book included an addition to rule 1 that requires directors to apply the rules correctly. Further, to assist the director and stewards with matters of interpretation of the rules, where ambiguity or protests occur, the CC introduced the role of referee. This has been very well received at all levels. No change required.

53. Temporary airspace that is time limited should not be banned for the whole day

The rules sub-group agrees. Such airspace is not required to be so prohibited in the BGA rules. This is a matter for the organisation to decide on the day.

54. The task sheet should be definitive

The BGA rules presently do not say this, but it is implied that the task sheet is definitive but so are the local rules and, if the local rules say so, the published airspace file. The rules sub-group propose to clarify this by adding the following rule 5.2.5:

‘When determining whether an infringement of these rules has occurred, and for assessing protests, the task sheet, the local rules, and the published and notified airspace file, taken together, will be definitive.’

Rules changes intended to enhance safety of competition

In addition to procedural rules, the competitions committee was asked to consider ways to improve pilot flying behaviour and safety in UK competition, The following topics were considered:

A. Safety Briefing

We have decided to make a safety briefing mandatory for all pilots on day 1 of the competition. This briefing will cover appropriate pilot flying behaviour at key points in the contest. A video is to be made covering these points that may be used by the organisation if they feel they are unable to deliver this briefing themselves.

B. Dangerous low finishes

The removal of a finish line option will be consulted on in 2024 for possible implementation in 2025. The CC consider that there is no strong argument against the fact that finish rings are safer than finish lines on the boundary of the airfield. Reference in rule 5.9.2.4 to ring size will be changed from 'normally 3k' to 'minimum 3k radius and 300ft above airfield reference point'

C. Provisional Licences

During 2024 consideration will be given to issuing provisional competition licences to pilots wishing to fly in competition for the first time. In this first year pilots flying competence and behaviour would be observed and directors asked to endorse the issue of a full licence for the following season. Combined with better training resources, it is hoped that this will mitigate safety issues concerning pilots new to the competition environment.

D. Proximity Analysis Software

Proximity Analysis Software has been developed that can identify the pattern of close flying whilst on task. This has been used successfully in international competitions to positively affect pilot flying behaviours. This software is now available for use in UK competitions and organisations will be encouraged to use the tool in 2024 to identify and address areas of concern through the PSC.

End.