

Frequently asked questions (v3. 22 May 2005)

From 19 May onwards this document will be continuously modified up until the end of the championships. The latest version will be available on the website until 26 May and on-site thereafter.

Q1: In the event of a pilot flying a task and encountering dangerous flying conditions forcing an abandon, is the pilot scored as such or are there provisions for that pilot to start that task again later? Would a red flag on launch make a difference for pilots already airborne?

First, one has to consider what happens in a 'traditional' style championships:

A) If it is an 'open window' takeoff, then the Director decides whether the window opens or not. If it does open, and at least one pilot takes off, he can't stop the task except for reasons of 'force majeure'. In practice this happens very rarely, for example when a thunderstorm comes along.

B) If it is a fixed order takeoff or entry to a gate or something, usually used in precision tasks, then these tasks have quite often been abandoned, but always because it always takes a considerable time to get all pilots through the course and the conditions have changed significantly between one end of the task and the other.

So. Comparing the above to the new format.

The director still makes the ultimate decision whether the window is open or not. If the green flag is flying then it's open, if the yellow flag is flying then it's not. In principle, if there is a consistent wind of about 20 Km/h or more then very likely the yellow flag will be flying. (see Bulletin 2 for flag meanings).

However, there is more than one shade of grey, it may be sensible to fly one task when the green flag is flying, but not another. This is a new decision given to each pilot intrinsic to the new format, which ultimately should permit more tasks to be flown than is possible in a traditional style of championship because of the nature of delays for briefings Etc. It does however rely on each pilot being sensible enough not to attempt some of the precision tasks in a strong-ish wind, but these tasks are quick to complete and are set up so the pilot could leave as little as perhaps 10 or 15 min between handing over his token to declare the task and actually starting it. Case B of a traditional style of championships cannot happen, except to a 'special' fixed task of which there is only one in this championship.

If the director has to erect a red flag, then this will be for the same reasons of 'force majeure' as one has in a traditional championship. In this case, all pilots are to land immediately.

To answer the question then: "*In the event of a pilot flying a task and encountering dangerous flying conditions forcing an abandon...*" then no, he will not be allowed to re-start a task unless the red flag was erected while he was flying a task, which is no different to a traditional style championship.

Added 22 May:

Obviously, if you're away from the field on a task there's no way you could know whether the red flag has been raised or not, but if you come back to the field when the red flag is raised then you should land immediately even if this means you haven't finished the task, and you will be permitted to re-start it.

If, by landing when the red flag was flying you did finish the task anyway, then you can be scored, so you have the choice of saying you want to re-start, or be scored. You can't be scored and then decide you want to re-start.

If the red flag is raised while you are away from the field, and you landed, then you can re-start the task.

If the red flag was raised while you were out on a task, you didn't land, (maybe it was raised because of a meteorological phenomenon local to the field) and when you finished the task the yellow or green were flying, then you won't be permitted to re-start.

So; the only time you could potentially come unstuck is when the red flag isn't raised back at the field but you meet some nasty weather away from the field and decide for your own safety to land. This is a perfectly airmanlike thing to do, but unfortunately if such an action were penalty-free you can be sure it would very quickly be abused, so by default the normal 'land out - score zero' penalty applies, the same as in traditional style championships.

In reality, it's very unlikely the red flag will have much effect. It is much more likely the yellow flag was flying some time before it became necessary to hoist a red, so there would be nobody in the air for it to affect in the first place.

Q2: As timings are important in many tasks, what is 'official competition time'.

Ordinarily we will use BST for all times. (ie ordinary local time which is UTC + 1h)

The MLR flight recorders always *record* in UTC but you can set the local time offset in the MLR's so they *display* local time. See the 'FR instructions' on the website.

We don't need an 'official clock' because GPS's are accurate to the nearest nanosecond.

There is one catch though WHICH IS VERY IMPORTANT. 'Native GPS time' is a constant count of seconds since 00:00 January 6 1980. It started the same as UTC but has been diverging slowly ever since because of the occasional leap seconds included in UTC. GPS time is presently UTC + 14 seconds. The difference is perfectly predictable and most GPS's automatically take account of this so the time they display really is based on UTC. Unfortunately it's a fault of the MLR that it doesn't, so it is capable of recording times slightly different to UTC.

To be sure your MLR is genuinely recording UTC you must manually check that the GPS Date is set to 2005, it tells you how to do this in the instructions. Once set, it will account correctly for the offset from GPS time and it won't change, even after a 'reset' or reboot.