

PIT BOSS

OK, You've agreed to be the pit boss for your club's next contest but just what are you expected to do? Well here's a brief description of what your duties are and how to perform them properly.

What are the duties of the Pit Boss?

- 1) First and foremost it is your responsibility to see that every model is safe to fly!
- 2) Secondly you are responsible to see that the contestants are called to the flight line when they are scheduled to compete.
- 3) Thirdly, you should make sure that all flights move through the pits and circles smoothly and efficiently.

What tools will you need to do your job properly?

You will require a clipboard, paper, pen, micrometer, weight scale, a copy of the pull-test engine/weight table and your fingers to complete your job.

How do you accomplish your duties?

- 1) Safety is your main concern.

Every set of lines should be checked for kinks and frays. Walk the lines from model to handle using your fingers and if you feel kinks or frays that you think would create a safety problem advise the contestant to replace the lines.

Measure each line to insure that it is the proper diameter for the engine size. Use a micrometer but remember to round up or down (e.g. a set of .015 lines can be as thin as .0146 and still be legal)

Check with the contestant to determine the size of engine used and pull test each model according to the AMA rule book weight/engine table.

2) Flight schedule

When you have a large contest with a lot of different events or if you have a contestant who is judging in a different class you often get schedule conflicts. It is a good idea to cover what you will do in this event with your CD prior to the contest and cover this in the pilots' meeting so that everyone knows what procedure you intend to follow. What usually happens is that you simply move the conflict down in the flight order. Two places in usually all that is required but use your common sense here. You want to make it possible for the contestant to take his/her flights. What is most important is that every contestant knows what you intend to do before they get to the pits. If you cover the problem in the pilot's meeting you will save yourself a lot of grief and problems at contest time.

It is a good idea to post a copy of the flight schedule in the pit area so that the contestants can refer to it instead of constantly checking with you to find out when they are due to fly. Make sure that you have a minimum of three contestants safety checked and pull tested at all times. You need this many ready because there may be attempts taken and you will want to have the next person ready to go without delay.

In the event of a contestant taking an attempt remember that he/she will move down two places in the flight schedule. Make sure that the next scheduled contestant is ready to fly as soon as the circle is clear. As soon as the attempt is over talk to the pilot and advise him/her of their new place in the schedule then walk over to the judges and make sure that they have the score sheet for that contestant relocated on their clipboards in the correct location. Make the necessary changes on the flight schedule you have on your clipboard and also on the copy you have posted in the pit area.

3) Smooth and efficient movement through the pits and circles.

The best way to accomplish this task is to make sure that you communicate with everyone all of the time. The worst thing that can happen to a contestant is not to know when he/she is scheduled to fly. Although it is not your job to run all over the field to find every contestant you do have a responsibility to tell people what is happening. Always make sure that you have three people ready in the pits. Let them know who's "up next", who's "on deck" and who's

“in reserve”. Ask them to be ready to move onto the circle as soon as the previous contestant has vacated it. As soon as you “up next” has moved onto the circle tell your “on deck” that he’s now “up next”, your “in reserve” that he is now “on deck” and move the next scheduled contestant into the pits as your new “in reserve”. If you have a contestant who waves off a flight let the three in the pits know that he will be moving down two places in the flight order so he will become your new “on deck” and be scheduled to take his second attempt in front of the person who is now “in reserve”.

Always ask each contestant to have his/her model fueled and ready to go before they enter the circle. Remember that the AMA rule book states that the contestant has a total of three minutes from the time the flight is called until they must be ready to start the engine. Also be aware that some models will flood out if they are fueled too early so be flexible here and ask them to do this but do not order it! Tell your contestants that if they can be fuel up and ready to go as soon as they get onto the circle it will help to keep the contest moving along smoothly. Ask for their help but do not force them to do something not in their best interests.

On the same note make sure that you tell the contestants that it is their responsibility to be in the pits and ready to fly on schedule. Tell them that you do not intend to run all over the field looking for them prior to their flights. Remind them that they have three (3) minutes from the time you call their flight to be on the circle and ready to start their engine. Confirm that if they have a schedule conflict they should immediately advise you and you will be happy to make the changes necessary to allow them to complete all of their flights on time but that they have to tell you about the conflict. Let them know that if they are off somewhere practicing you can not run about looking for them. Tell them that in the event that they are not ready for their flight when it is called you will wait for the three minutes, charge them with an “attempt” and move them down two places in the flight schedule. If they miss the second flight call they will be charged with an official flight and give a “0” score

The easiest way to have a smooth running pit are is to make sure that you communicate. Let the contestants know what is happening and make sure that the judges know of any changes in the flight schedule. Be friendly and helpful but keep everyone on schedule and keep them moving through the pits. Try to have the next flyer ready to move onto the circle as soon as the previous flyer moves off it. A well run pit should allow you to complete between 6 and 7 flights per hour. The job of Pit Boss is one of the toughest but it is the one which can “make or break” a contest. There is nothing so frustrating to a contestant or to a judge as not knowing who is scheduled to fly next or experiencing confusion in the pits. If the pits are well run everyone leaves the contest with a good feeling and talks to their friends about how organized the contest was and what a pleasure it was to compete at it.