



*Fédération  
Aéronautique  
Internationale*

## Event Rules

# 66<sup>th</sup> Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett

## FAI World Long Distance Gas Balloon Championship

Based on Model Event Rules Version 2023

17 March 2023

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## **Introduction**

The rules and regulations for the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett consist of:

- These competition rules
- FAI Sporting Code, General Section and Section 1 (Balloons and Airships)

The Organizers Handbook (OH) contains guidance and also the rules laid down in the April 1980 meeting of the FAI Ballooning Commission (CIA) with Amendments.

# **1 Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett Details**

## **1.1 Title**

This event shall be known as 66<sup>th</sup> Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett.

## **1.2 Objectives**

The objectives of the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett are:

- a. to determine the team covering the greatest distance;
- b. to promote the development of the sport of gas ballooning by an international comparison of pilots' performance and balloon materials;
- c. to promote international relations and friendships among all ballooning nations and pilots.

## **1.3 Definition of the winner**

The winner shall be the team covering the greatest distance.

## **1.4 Organisers**

The Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett is organized by Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, Inc.

## **1.5 Correspondence**

All entries and official correspondence have to be addressed to:

66<sup>th</sup> Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett Albuquerque 2023

C/O AIBF Inc.

4401 Alameda Blvd. NE

Albuquerque, NM 87113

Phone: +1-505-821-1000

E-Mail: sparks@balloonfiesta.com

## **1.6 Personnel**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Event Director        | Tomas Hora, Germany                                  |
| Deputy Event Director | John Petrehn, United States of America               |
| Steward               | Marc Andre, Switzerland                              |
| Safety Officer        | Wally Book, United States of America                 |
| Jury (president)      | Garry Lockyer (President, on-site) Canada            |
| Jury (member)         | John Davis (Member, onsite) United States of America |
| Jury (member)         | Luc Van Geyte (Member remote) Belgium                |

### 1.7 **Date and place**

The Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett will be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA.

The latitude and longitude of the launch platform will be given at the general briefing.

The Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett will be held on October 6 to 14, 2023 General Briefing / Closing Ceremony

### 1.8 **Times**

Unless otherwise specified all times are in Local Time of the event location.

### 1.9 **Language**

The official language of the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett shall be English.

### 1.10 **Documents**

The following documents may be inspected when pilots register on arrival at the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett:

- a. For each of the two pilots
  - (1) Pilot Certificate
  - (2) Pilot Log Book
  - (3) Medical Statement if part of the requirements for the license
  - (4) Radio License
  - (5) FAI Sporting License according to FAI regulations (upload to FAI database)
  - (6) Passport or other Identity Document
- b. For the balloon
  - (1) Balloon Registration Document
  - (2) Balloon Airworthiness Documents and Inspection Records
  - (3) Certificate of Insurance
- c. Valid electronic or paper aeronautical charts for the competition area.

Documents must be provided on a defined timeline (usually 30 days before the General Briefing) specified by the event director. Not complying with the timeline may result in air space limitations during the race for the pilot concerned.

## **2 Entry Conditions**

### 2.1 **Participation**

The Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett is open to all NACs which have met their obligations to the FAI. Each NAC may nominate up to three balloon teams, each consisting of two pilots who must have the nationality of the NAC having entered them. Pilots who have been a resident for the preceding five years in the same country as the NAC entering them shall be eligible to be nominated by that NAC.

The NAC must nominate the pilot in command for each aerostat entered, and this person will be responsible during the whole flight. He or she will be mentioned first in the official reports.

### 2.2 **Pilot licences and experience**

Both pilots

- must hold a valid Lighter-than-air (LTA) license (free balloon)
- Starting 2024: must hold a valid license to be pilot in command of a gas balloon
- must hold a FAI Sporting License issued by their National Air Sport Control (NAC)

- must have logged at least 100 hours as pilot in command in a free balloon at the entry closing date
- must be able to communicate with Air Traffic Control in English
- must have sufficient experience in operating the navigation aids.

The pilot in command additionally

- must be authorized to be pilot in command of a gas balloon for at least twelve months prior to the start of the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett
- must have logged at least 50 hours as pilot in command in a gas balloon at the entry closing date
- must be authorized to fly at night.

### **2.3 Entry fee**

The entry fee for all participants is \$500.00 (USD), \$250.00 USD to be refunded upon return of organizer provided tracker device. The fee and the completed entry form must reach the organizer by the closing entry date (2.4).

The organiser may set-up electronic registration tools (online).

### **2.4 Closing entry date**

The closing entry date for the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett is April 30, 2023.

### **2.5 Acceptance of rules and regulations**

Pilots are required to know, understand, accept and abide by the Sporting Code and the rules and regulations for the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett.

### **2.6 Rights**

Through the registration, the pilots give full permission to the local organizers, the FAI (Federation Aéronautique Internationale) and its authorized representatives, to use any picture, movie, data or sound recording of the pilots, the balloon, equipment and team members for news, advertising, promotional media and commercial use.

### **2.7 Insurance**

Pilots must provide proof that their balloons are insured for at least \$1,000,000.00 USD for third party liability during the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett.

Insurance cannot be purchased from the organizer. Organizers will arrange the process for any additional liability insurance they may require.

## **3 Balloon Qualifications**

### **3.1 Definition of a balloon**

For the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett a gas balloon is defined as an aircraft lighter than air, supported statically in the air, with no means of propulsion by any power source and which obtains the buoyancy solely as a result of the difference in weight of the lifting gas and the surrounding air.

Only gas balloons with a maximum capacity of 1000 cubic meters may participate in the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett. A tolerance of plus 5% is allowed. Organizers are empowered to inspect any aerostat that they suspect is in violation to this rule.

### **3.2 Airworthiness**

Aerostats flown in the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett must have current certificates of registration and airworthiness, or in place of the latter, an equivalent document from the recognized authority of the

nation concerned. The organizers are empowered to reject any aerostat which in their opinion is not of a reasonable standard of airworthiness.

### **3.3 Hired balloon**

Pilots may enter balloons hired in another country other than the NAC they represent if they have the required pilot certificate for the balloon they are entering into the event.

### **3.4 Flags**

Each balloon must bear the national flag of the pilot's country, not less than one sq. meter in size.

### **3.5 Ballast**

Only water or fine sand may be used as ballast. Jettison of anything other than sand or water should only be done in case of an emergency and in no case if there is the possibility of harm to people or animals. Violation of this rule should be penalized according to rule 6.4.

### **3.6 Landing**

No envelope may be jettisoned at landing.

### **3.7 Transport**

Transport of the balloon to the launch field in Albuquerque, NM and after landing to the home city of the balloon is at the expense and responsibility of the pilots. Balloons should be at the launch field by October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

## **4 Instruments, equipment and other**

### **4.1 Flight instruments**

Each balloon must carry at least;

- (1) Barometric Altimeter
- (2) Variometer
- (3) VHF air-band radio with 25kHz channel spacing (720 channels), minimum 5 watt radio plus back up radio
- (4) Strobe light with minimum brightness required for aircraft
- (5) Beam light for night landing
- (6) GPS with activated position and altitude recording function with a maximum logging interval of 5 minutes.
- (7) Life raft or survival suites shall be carried for any anticipated flight over large bodies of water
- (8) Transponder minimum Mode C with 4096 codes
- (9) ELT: With a Digital 406 MHz S-ELT or EPIRB which should contain an integrated analog (121.5 MHz) homing beacon and be registered with Cospas-Sarsat.  
Note: SPOT, InReach or similar satellite tracking devices are not a valid ELT/EPIRB.
- (10) Backup live tracker (incl. altitude) which covers the expected flying area. Minimum update rate 15min.

### **4.2 Tracker**

Each balloon will carry an official GPS logger/tracking device provided by the organizer. Organizers will publish balloon positions with altitudes during the flight.

The competitor must provide access details (web address, login credentials if needed) of the backup tracker to the Event Director before the General Briefing. This information must be kept confidential by the Event Director (and his team) throughout the race.

If the official GPS logger/tracking devices are not able to transmit position/altitude information, the Event Director should publish the position/altitude based on the backup tracker. The event director must do his best effort to provide up-to-date position/altitude information to all teams.

If it can be proved that the signal from a balloon Tracker has been modified, or interfered with, then the Event Director has authority to penalize the balloon pilot's final result.

#### **4.3 Equipment**

There is no restriction in the use of navigation aids and flight control instruments. Every balloon must be equipped with sufficient oxygen as required by the applicable aviation law or the flight manual.

Faulty GPS recording device may be penalized under rule 6.4. In case of suspected altitude violations, altitude recording device (GPS or barograph) may be checked. Each balloon should carry a backup GPS that would constitute a back-up tracking log in case of tracker failure. Transponders shall be turned on before launch and kept on in all air space where required. If transponder is turned off it should be noted on the pilots ATC log (see 6.3).

#### **4.4 OTHER**

Every balloon must be equipped with a filling hose 10 meters long and with the necessary amount of sand bags for inflation and flight.

At launch each balloon must carry at least 10 liters of water for ballasting over sensitive areas.

## **5 Races and Prizes**

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### **5.1 Result**

The race is a First Category Event of the FAI and consists of a distance flight. The final classification will be based on the greatest distance covered. The distance will be measured by determination of the arc of the great circle on the WGS84 ellipsoid. The reference point is the coordinate of the launch platform.

### **5.2 Holder of the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett Trophy**

The NAC whose team wins the race will be the holder of the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett for one year. A NAC shall become the final holder of the cup after winning three consecutive races.

The nationality of the team who wins the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett trophy determines the NAC which will hold the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett two years later.

It is the responsibility of the NAC holding the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett to organize the competition in its country two years after winning the Coupe. However, if for any reason this NAC renounces its prerogative, or it fails to meet any of the event requirements of deadlines published by the CIA, the CIA may entrust the organization of the event to another NAC.

### **5.3 Publication of results**

The official race results will be published within 24 hours after the Event Director has been notified of the landing of the last balloon.

## **6 Flight Rules**

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### **6.1 Flight conditions**

All flights will be carried out under Visual Flight Rules.

## **6.2 Launch**

Weather permitting the balloons will launch on October 7, 2023.

A delay to October 11, 2023 may be used if necessary to assure a safe and successful race.

The order of departure will be decided by two separate draws. The first will fix the order of departure of the NACs. The second will fix the order of departure of the different balloons of each NAC. The balloons will depart in the following order:

- The first balloon of the first NAC;
- The first balloon of the second NAC;
- The first balloon of the third NAC; etc.
- The second balloon of the first NAC;
- The second balloon of the second NAC;
- The second balloon of the third NAC; etc.
- until all balloons have taken off.

All balloons will launch within a time window fixed by the Event Director. As a guide, balloons will be launched at intervals between three and five minutes as long as it is safe to do so. A Launch master will launch each balloon.

Permission to launch does not relieve the pilots of complete responsibility for his take-off, including adequate lift to clear all obstacles and other balloons and to continue safely in flight.

If a pilot is not ready for take-off at the appointed time, he may be penalized. If needed the Event Director can move him to a different launch slot.

## **6.3 Airspace**

A definition of the competition area must be published 30 days in advance of the event. The competition area may be reduced at the general briefing. The competition area must be open to all participating pilots and teams.

The Event Director should define other airspace limitations such as procedures for airspace over international waters prior to take-off.

Pilots must be familiar with and abide by the applicable aviation regulations of the countries. Pilots are required to log all ATC clearances (ATC log) given en route; these must be returned to the Event Director in a sealed envelope for investigation in case of suspected violations.

Infringements of Aviation regulations are in the first instance a matter between the pilot and the Aviation Authorities. If the Event Director receives information from an Aviation Authority that air law may have been violated, he should investigate and take action as appropriate. Pilots who are not able to comply with ATC instructions will be penalized under FAI Sporting Code Section 1 Aerostats, ANNEX 5.

## **6.4 Penalties**

Penalties will be based on the FAI Sporting Code Section 1 Aerostats, ANNEX 5.

In a case where a technical infringement of the rules or failure to comply with requirements caused by mistake or inadvertence has occurred and no advantage has been attained, the competitor concerned will, as a guide, be penalized by a reduction of not less than 2% of the best distance.

Serious infringement, such as dangerous or hazardous actions or repetitions of lesser infringements will be penalized by a reduction of not less than 5% of the best distance.

Unsportsmanlike behaviour which includes deliberate attempts to deceive or mislead officials, intentional airspace violations, falsification of documents or repeated serious infringements of rules should, as a guide, result in disqualification. The pilot is also responsible for the actions of his ground crew and command center.

## **6.5 Airspace penalties**

Failure to comply with airspace regulations or requirements – given to pilots by the Event Director in writing in any pre take-off briefings – may result in a penalty even though pilots may have received an individual ATC clearance prior or during the flight.

# **7 Landing**

## **7.1 Landing position**

The precise point at which the aerostat's basket, car or gondola comes to rest is the landing point.

Momentary contact with the ground or water does not constitute a landing, nor does contact between a trail rope and the ground, unless the aerostat is moored. A drag after initial ground contact during landing is considered to be a normal part of balloon landing and the final resting place is the landing position.

Intermediate landings are not permitted.

Pilots landing on water such as lakes, seas, or rivers will not receive a result.

## **7.2 Calculation of landing position**

The point of landing will be defined by the geographic co-ordinates in degrees, minutes, seconds and decimal-seconds of longitude and latitude. Other evidence is to be considered if necessary.

## **7.3 Reporting**

The landing position shall be communicated to the Command Center or Event Director as soon as possible, normally within one (1) hour. In any case the Command Center must be informed before any public announcement from the pilot or the crew (e.g. via social media).

The message to the Command Center must include a note, if the balloon was moored/moved after landing.

# **8 Communication, Complaints and protests**

## **8.1 Communication**

The Event Director must define at the General Briefing the ways of communication. The competitor is required to monitor the communication on a regular basis.

## **8.2 Complaint**

Complaints concerning any matter have to be made to the Event Director or handed in at the Command Center. Complaints must be in writing and in English and will receive a written reply. Pilots are allowed to email their complaint to the Event Director.

## **8.3 Protest**

If dissatisfied with the Event Director's reply to a complaint, a competitor has the right to make a protest to the International Jury. Protests have to be handed in at the Competition Centre to an official who will record the time of receipt. Protests shall be accompanied by a deposit of \$100.00 USD.

A competitor presenting a protest may make a verbal presentation of his case in addition to his written statement. The verbal presentation may not exceed fifteen minutes, except by leave of the Jury. A competitor not fluent in English may be assisted by an interpreter.

The deposit will be returned only when the protest is upheld.

#### **8.4 Time limit**

The time limit for complaints and protests is eight (8) hours after publication of the official results. The time limit is reduced to one (1) hour after 12:00 PM on October 13, 2023. Times between 11pm and 7am LT are disregarded. Protests must be handed in within two hours of a reply to a complaint.

In case the event director receives a complaint from an Aviation Authority per rule 6.3 after the publication of the final results, he must investigate the matter and he may publish a new official result.

#### **8.5 Official Media**

Media coverage is very important for the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett. The competitor should work with to the official Gordon Bennett media team and provide media content and interviews before, during and after flight to the best of their capability.

### **9 Liability and Safety**

#### **9.1 Waiver**

By entering the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett the pilots waive any right of action against the organizer, the event officials, the owner of any site and their respective members, employees or personnel for any loss or damage sustained by him in consequence of any act or omission on their part or on the part of other pilots.

#### **9.2 Loss and damage of the pilots properties**

The balloon and other property of a competitor shall be at the risk of the competitor at all times. By entering the Coupe a competitor agrees to waive all claims for injury to himself or loss or damage to his property.

#### **9.3 Liability to third parties**

By entering the Coupe a competitor assumes all liability for injury, loss or damage to third parties or their property and agrees to indemnify the organizers in respect thereof.

#### **9.4 Pilot to be responsible for safe operation of his balloon**

A competitor remains completely responsible for the safe operation of his balloon at all stages of inflation, launch, flight and landing. He must ensure that his equipment, his crew and his own level of skill and experience are suitable for the conditions in his own judgment. No flight is mandatory and all take-offs are at the option of the pilot.

#### **9.5 Information provided in good faith**

All meteorological reports and forecasts and other safety or navigational information is provided in good faith for the guidance of competitors. Officials will be appointed to regulate the inflation and launching of balloons.