



ACES Aircombat Ground Support Manual

Advanced

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About the ACES Ground Support manuals

The ACES Ground Support Manual series of documents is written to make it easier for model-aviators to start with Aircombat, as a part of the contact-network ACES.

The Ground Support Manual series consist of three manuals:

- Introduction
- Basic
- Advanced

The Introduction manual is supposed to introduce you into the world of Aircombat and ACES, and the general ideas behind it all.

The Basic manual is supposed to learn you how to arrange a smaller contest, for the first time.

The Advanced manual (this one) is supposed to learn you how to arrange a somewhat bigger contest, and how to put the contests into a cup, and some other a little bit more "advanced" doings.

"I have always wondered whether it was man's aggressive disposition to hunt that triggered one's reflexes so swiftly and immediately or whether it was the experience gained in a hundred dogfights that prompted one to make the right decisions in a fraction of a second - whether in defence or in attack."

General Johannes Steinhoff

Introduction

This paper will explain how to do some little more "advanced" doings when arranging Aircombat contests and cups.

For instance, when arranging a cup or a bigger contest, this is the manual to read.

"To be a fighter pilot, there is one prime requisite - think fast, and act faster."

Major John T. Godfrey

Arrange a cup

Why do we want a cup?

It seems pilots like the idea of not only going to a single contest, but instead participating in a greater context - a cup! It also seems to get the pilots to go to more contests, as they want to make up for a few bad rounds flown at a contest previously in the cup, just to get a better standing in the cup.

A simple cup

Arranging a cup is quite simple:

Plan for a few (at least three) contests during the year. The cup should also have a geographical covering - it could be a regional cup, a national cup, etc.

The way the results of the cup is counted should be decided. The general way is described in the ACES regulations, but you have to decide on exactly how to count the results - for instance, how many rounds of the contests in the cup, per pilot, should be used to add for the final result?

Assemble the dates of the contests into one list. Make a common press-release to the hobby-media of the cup, including the list of contest-dates.

Then run the contests.

Try to update the results as the contests are flown, and publish the cup-results on a suitable media (the national newsletter and/or the internet). Remember, the more often the results are updated, the more interested the competing pilots will get!

After the last contest has been flown, update the results and announce a winner. Try to make the winner a little special, by mentioning his name in a cup-report in hobby-magazines.

Also, special awards could be given for the best pilots in the cup.

And that's it!

More things to do

The cup should have a name. If it's a national cup, the name could be "the <year> <nation> Aircombat Cup". If being sponsored by a company, the cup name could include the company-name.

The cup could of course be sponsored. If you try to do this, then try to find the sponsor very early, so that the company-name can be included in all press-releases, etc.

"What you had to do was identify the aircraft's good points and then build your tactics round them."

Captain Alan J. Leahy

A bigger contest

Arranging a bigger contest needs a lot more of planning and organisation than arranging a smaller contest. We will try to explain some of the things you have to do to arrange such an event.

Pre-planning

The first step to take is to make the general plans of the contest. Things that must be decided are:

What kind of contest is it?

Is it:

- a championship?
- an international event?
- a part of a cup?

And...

- Where will the event be located?
- When will the event take place?
- What Aircombat rules are to be used (national/international)?
- How many pilots will (probably) attend?
- What will the entrance-fee be?
- How will pilots sign up for the contest?

Overall time-schedule

When having done the initial planning of the event (see above), you can start making a time-schedule of the event, ranging from "today", to the day when everything concerning the contest is done (probably some time after the contest is flown).

Be careful not to under-estimate the time it takes to do things! The biggest experience arranging bigger contests is that everything takes longer time than expected.

Only put up the general actions that must be taken on this time-schedule - for instance, when press-releases should go out, the last date to sign up for the contest, etc.

Action-list

Then make a list of all the things that has to be done to run the contest (this list will grow over time). Try to keep this list as general as possible. You will notice that different things-to-do in itself contains a lot of other things-to-do, so this list will otherwise expand very much.

Then make a list of things that are dependant on other things that has to be done.

Finally make an action-list where you try to give the different things a latest date when they must be done.

From the action-list, try to find different actions that can be grouped into different contest-projects. This might for instance be "judging", "audience", etc. Some actions are however so small that you can just keep them as simple actions, with a last date and a responsible person assigned to it.

Status/date	Responsible	Action/Project
✓	ME	Send out pressreleases to international hobby-media
1999-08-15	HB	Sponsor-project
1999-09-18	ME	Reports after contest -project
.....

Fig. 1: Example of action-list. This could be an international event, run at 1999-08-15.

Organisation

Now you have a list of contest-projects that must be run, to get the contest running. This is the time to find an organisation of the contest - that is, finding people to work with the different contest-projects.

On the action-list, write down the responsible persons of the different contest-projects.

For the bigger contest-projects ask the responsible person to produce a similar action-list, for their project alone. Ask them to update these action-lists continuously, and send it to you at intervals.

In this way the work of preparing the big contest is divided over several people, and you being the contest director still has the total overview of how the work is progressing.

To make the organisation of the event more clear, you might consider to draw an organisational chart showing who is working in which contest-project, etc.

The layout of the event

We will give some examples of what a bigger contest might include. The examples below are given in approximate chronological order in which they should be taken care of.

Initial planning

The pre-planning phase (see above) should have come up with the initial info of the contest, like date, place, etc.

Logotype

The contest may have its own logotype, to be used in pressreleases, on awards, etc.

Finances

The financial matters must be decided, as one of the first matters. Who is responsible? What budget does the contest have? Will the result be a plus or a minus? Who will cover up any financial losses? Who will get the possible financial income?

The above matters must be clearly decided, and preferably put on paper, before the work of the contest is continued!

Also always put up a buffer in the budget, for unexpected things that cost money. Experience show that this buffer is almost always needed!

Prizes/Sponsorship

What awards/prizes should be given to the competing pilots? Is there a possibility to get a sponsor?

It is very important to start the work to find a sponsor, as soon as possible! The name of the sponsor must be on all prints and info concerning the contest! Being too late on this one is not an option.

Timeschedule of the event

What will be the timeschedule of the event? The timeschedule is dependant on how many pilots are estimated to participate.

Always try to have some buffer when it comes to time - at bigger contests it always seem to take longer time to run the contest, than first thought. Weather can play a role here, as crashes and frequency-problems, or problems with judges, etc, etc.

Initial info/pressreleases

As soon as the overall data of the contest is set, some initial info should be sent out to the hobby-media. Of course, this is dependant on when the contests is scheduled, but as a general rule it is always wise to be early with initial info of the contest.

The initial info should at least contain:

- Name/type of the contest
- Rules used
- Place
- Date
- Entrance fee, and how to sign up
- Info for the audience
- Contactperson(s)

The following info might also be included in the initial info:

- Info on Aircombat
- Preliminary overall time-schedule of the event
- Road-description
- Frequencies allowed
- Info on where to stay overnight
- After contest dinner

Followup info/pressreleases

The followup info could contain the following:

- Time-schedule of the event
- Road-description, with maps.
- Frequencies allowed
- Info on where to stay overnight
- After contest dinner

The above info is directed to the participating pilots only.

Pressreleases should be directed to the local/national media. They should include:

- Name/type of the contest
- Place
- Date
- Info on Aircombat
- Contactpersons at the contest
- Invitation to the press

It is always advisable to have a PR-person picked out to be the contact when the press arrives.

Photo/video coverage of the contest

It is important to have lots of photos shot at the contest, to have material to publish in contest-reports after the contest. At least one person should be appointed to do this.

It is also nice to have video-shootings from the contest, to possibly make a video after the contest. One person could be assigned to do this.

Contest-documents

A lot of documents are needed at a bigger contest. They are described below:

- Road-signs. Special road-signs could be used for just this event.
 - Check-in list of pilots. A list of all participating pilots is needed.
 - Check-in of models. A documents to check that all points of a model is ok.
 - Number-signs for the pilots.
 - Scoreboard. Depending on the layout of the contest, standard scoreboards might be used.
 - Info-folder to the audience. The audience should be given the chance to appreciate Aircombat, by knowing what they are looking at.
- + some more depending on the layout of the contest.

Flight-lists

Special considerations might be taken, to prepare flight-lists at a bigger contest. Computer-programs might be used, to randomly determine who is to fly against who, in the different flights.

This is also dependant on how pilots sign up for the contest - it is easier to make the flight-lists if all pilots has to sign up in advance.

Contest-site preparations

There are a few things that must be prepared on the contest site.

Road-signs should be put up, to make it easy for contestants, audience and press to find the contest.

Contest-equipment, must be used to run a contest. This includes all the standard equipment like safetyline-marker, streamers, stopwatches, audience-line, etc.

Flags could be used, more important at an international contests.

Prize-stand is nice to use, when having the prize ceremonial. A standard 3-best-places stand should be used.

Result-board should be used at bigger events, to show the current standings in the contest.

Helpers

It is very important to find out what kind of, and how many, helpers are needed to put the contest through!

The work of finding the given amount of helpers should start as soon as possible. Possibly the helpers could get food and a small sum of money, in exchange for their work.

Needed helpers might be:

Judges (main and pilot)

Secretary, to keep track of scoreboards, update results, etc.

+ lots more, depending on the contest.

Audio equipment

It is a good idea to have a microphone and speakers at hand, to be able to tell the pilots and audience what is going on.

Best is of course to have a dedicated speaker, who continuously tells the audience what is going on, in the air, and on the ground.

Check-in of pilots & models

At bigger contests, the check in of pilots and models is a big task.

There should be at least two stands for this, available for as long time will be needed to check in both pilots and all of the models.

Warning: Do not under-estimate the time this procedure takes! Check in of models is known to take quite a long time.

Try to ease up the check in of models, for instance by setting up several stands for this procedure, so that several pilots can check in their models in parallel.

Opening ceremony

A real contest has an opening ceremony. Most often the contest director simply wish the participants welcome, and explains the contest opened.

At bigger international events, a hoist of flags with a speech from a wellknown person might be a suitable ceremony.

Handling the audience

At bigger contests, you can expect a lot of audience. A few things should be prepared:

Safety - the safety of the audience is of the highest importance! Providing safety-nets for the audience together with having the audience at one place (not spread around too much), is the best way to solve this problem.

Parking - all of the audience must park their cars somewhere. Be sure not to underestimate this, as you might otherwise get in trouble (possibly with the local police!). Also be sure to have the audience park their cars at a safe place, not risking to have any models crashing into a parked car.

Food & drink - the audience will probably want to both eat and drink some, while enjoying the contest. This is a perfect way to make some extra money, either for the local club, or for the contest in itself! Be sure to prepare this.

Info - The audience should be able to know what they are looking at. Provide them with as much info on Aircombat and the current contest as possible!

After-contest dinner

It is nice to have a dinner on the evening during or following the contest. This is a perfect way for pilots to meet and talk.

This matter can be solved in several different ways:

You could arrange a dinner at a local restaurant.

You could yourself hire a place and prepare a dinner.

You could have a barbeque, on the contest-field or on some other location.

Experience shows that the best option is to have the dinner at a local restaurant, to put the load of arranging a dinner from the arranging party.

After contest press-coverage

It is very important to cover the contest in media! This should be done as soon as possible after the contest is run.

Longer reports from the contest could be published in national hobby-magazines.

Shorter pressreleases could be sent out to international hobby-magazines.

If possible, have different persons write the different reports. In this way the coverage gets more personal.

"If it doesn't work, you can always check out a new one".

Classic aviator joke on the parachute

Quality

What is quality? Why do we need it? How do we implement it? These are questions answered in this chapter.

Why do we need quality?

We need quality, to constantly improve ourselves, and make both our organisation and our game better. This in its turn, makes us have more fun, and that is the main reason behind it all.

What is quality?

Quality is when you reach the goals you have set up. As simple as that.

How do we implement it?

To break it down into smaller components, we have to:

- Set up well defined goals, with well defined time-limits, and cost-limits.
- Find good means to measure the goals, if we reach the goals, or how far from reaching the goals we are.
- To improve the quality, based on previous goals, and measurements.

Setting up goals

Setting up well defined goals is a so called "top-down" activity. This means we start from the top, looking down. We do this below:

1. What are the main goals? We have to find the main-basic goals, to understand what we are doing. Why do we do what we do? Basically? Examples of the main goals are, to have fun, to fly aircombat, to meet good friends, etc. Let us call these goals the "Level 1 goals".
2. How do we reach the main goals? What do we do to reach the above main goals? An example: We want to have fun, so we fly aircombat. When we fly aircombat at contests, we meet good friends. This means we need contests. So, we have to arrange contests, and this is one of the "Level 2 goals".
3. Then, how do we reach the Level 2 goals? An example: How do we arrange contests? What do we need to do to arrange contests? These are the "Level 3 goals". The level 3 goals should be broken down into very small goals, like "We have to have streamers, we have to have a way to cut the streamer into proper width, we have to have equipment to measure the streamers, etc, etc, etc".

After having done the above, we know what is needed to reach our goals. Half the battle for quality is actually already won.

Measure

How do you measure the above goals? Well, every goal might have its own way of measurement. For instance, the Level 3 goal "We have to have streamers" above is quite easily measured - Was there enough streamers for every contestant at the contest?

Other goals are not so easily measured. The level 1 goal "To have fun" above is trickier to measure. Who wants to have fun? The pilots? The audience? If it's the pilots, then we should ask the pilots if they had fun. The best way to do this, is to let them answer the question "Did you have fun at this contest", on a scale ranging from 1-5, where 5 is the best, meaning most fun.

Measurement is very important but takes time and resources. However, without it you can never know whether you have good quality or not! To make the task of measuring quality simpler, you should make checklists, and simple fill-in protocols for the pilots and the audience. What the pilots and the audience should fill in, is dependant on what goals you find in your definition of the goals.

Improvement

Then, when having the results at hand, it is time to find out: Did we reach the goals we defined? If we did, then it's way fine. If not, we have to start asking questions like:

- Was the goals wrongly defined?
- Was the measurements inaccurate?
- If it is clear that we do not reach the goals we have set up, how should we change our activities to reach the goals?

If it stands clear that we do not reach our goals, the hard thing is to accept it, and to find ways to improve the activities we do. It might be a good idea to let someone who is not involved in the ordinary activities to try to find new good ideas on how to improve the activities. You might yourself be "blind", not seeing how to improve the things you do. If you appoint such an external improvement-advisor, be careful not to be critical on this advisor. Be open to new ideas, as only change can improve the activities, and reach the goals you have set up.

Finally, remember, all changes might not result in improvement. It is however very important always to try to change activities, if they do not reach the goals set up. It must be allowed to make mistakes! Changing activities is unfortunately bound to cause some trouble. Learn from the mistakes, and improve again. In the end, through a constant quality-process, the goals will be reached, and good quality will be guaranteed!

"Docendo Discimus".

Latin, meaning We learn by learning.

Training camps

A good way to let the members of ACES in a certain section (country, group, squadron, etc) learn more of Aircombat, and have a good time, is to arrange a training-camp.

The main goals of a training camp is to let everyone participating:

- Improve their skills in flying Aircombat
- Have a good time

From the section's (country, group, squadron, etc) point of view, a training camp has the goal to make its pilots place better at contests and in cups.

To date, not many organised training camps have been run in ACES. For this reason, the guidelines in this manual are more of a theoretic guidance.

Purpose

Why do we want to arrange this training-camp? This is the first, and most important, question to be answered. When we know this one, it gets easier to answer the below questions. Ther purpose could for instance be to raise the general skill of the participants, or to raise the skill for a single contest, or a single cup. Is there one single skill that should be focused on, or are all skills taken into account?

Place

When arranging a training camp, the place should be carefully chosen. A training camp is (usually) run over several days, and the below considerations should be taken into account:

- Geographical location. How far is the training camp to most of its participants?
- Hostel facilities. The participants must stay overnight near the training site. Cost?
- Training site. A model-airfield (or several?) must be available. Should this model-airfield be "rough", or easy to fly?
- Weather conditions. How about winds, clouds, probability of rain, etc?
- Altitude. Height above sea level has an impact on our small fighters.

Date

When should the training-camp be arranged? Before the coming season, during the season, or after? Before a particular event? How long should the training camp be? How much will it cost if X days long? How much can the section or the participants afford? How long time will be needed to accomplish a raise of skills in the skill-areas selected above in Purpose?

Cost

Who should pay for the costs? If the costs are payed by the section, who should be picked to participate in the training-camp?

Literature

Should some literature be handed out to the participants? How to get this literature? Buy, or write?

Instructors

Should special instructors be hired? Who should be picked as instructors?

Equipment

Should the participants bring their own equipment, or should models, engines or other equipment be handed out during the training? Be aware that during flight-training, if flying against each other, the risk of collisions is high, and thus also the risk of losing equipment during training.

Rewards

After the training-camp, should the participants receive some special reward? At least a diploma or special badge could be handed out.

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