

An Explanation of Competitive Tasks used in the BFA HACD Rulebook

Part 1

By Drew Egerton

The following is intended to be a fairly simple and brief explanation of the tasks included in Chapter 15 of the Balloon Federation of America Hot Air Competition Division rulebook. Most of the tasks and rules were derived directly from international level competition. By the end of this tutorial, you will hopefully have a better understanding of the rules, language and strategy involved in tasks that you may not have been as familiar with before. This is aimed primarily at the less experienced competitor in an educational effort, but may also be a beneficial guide for crew, officials and volunteers. The HACD hopes to continue this effort into a series of educational projects to encourage growth and camaraderie among competitors of all skill levels.

We'll start with the first five tasks in Part 1 and cover the others in later articles. Any comments or suggestions to improve are appreciated. For each task, I have copied the rules directly from the HACD rulebook and then provided a brief explanation.

15.1 PILOT DECLARED GOAL (PDG)xe "PILOT DECLARED GOAL (PDG)"

15.1 1.1

Competitors will attempt to achieve a mark or valid track point close to a goal selected and declared by him.

15.1 1.2

Task Data:

Method of declaration (also see 12.3 AND Appendix G)
Number of goals permitted
Goals available for declaration
Minimum and maximum distances of goal(s) from CLP or ILP as per TDS
Minimum distance of goal from any subsequent goals or targets, if applicable

15.1 1.3

The result is the distance from the mark or closest valid track point to the nearest valid declared goal. Smallest result is best.

The Pilot Declared Goal (PDG) is much less common in this day with the near elimination of observers in the USA. However, some events have found ways to continue the use of PDGs by using either multiple set targets with measuring teams, or using GPS logger scoring only (no markers thrown). A PDG is typically placed first or early in the task string and can also be a favorite for flights with light or changing winds.

The basic idea is that the pilot must declare a target of his own choosing, usually before launch, and fly to that point. Closest result is best. Occasionally a tricky director will call 2 or more tasks and allow the PDG to be flown in ANY ORDER with respect to the others. Strategy becomes important here to choose a goal that allows the best results on the other tasks as well.

15.2 JUDGE DECLARED GOAL (JDG)xe "JUDGE DECLARED GOAL (JDG)"

15. 2.1

Competitors will attempt to achieve a mark or valid track point close to a set goal.

15. 2.2

T a s k

D a t a :

Position of set goal/target

15. 2.3

Result is distance from the mark or closest valid track point to the target, if displayed, or goal.
Smallest result is best.

The Judge Declared Goal (JDG) is a much more common task and can be found at almost any event. Simply put, the Director tells you where a target will be placed and you fly to it as close as possible. Markers or GPS logger scoring could be used. If both are used, a marker score always beats a logger score if it is in bounds.

15.3 HESITATION WALTZ (HWZ)xe "HESITATION WALTZ (HWZ)"

15. 3.1

Competitors will attempt to achieve a mark or valid track point close to one of several set goals.

15. 3.2

Task Data:

Position of various set goals/targets

Minimum and maximum distances of goal from CLP or ILP, if applicable

15. 3.3

The result is distance from the mark or closest valid track point to the nearest target, if displayed, or goal. Smallest result is best.

Another very common task is the Hesitation Waltz (HWZ). Sometimes called a Multiple Judge Declared Goal, the HWZ is the same as a JDG except the pilot is given at least 2 (sometimes even 4 or 5) targets to choose from. These targets are usually close to each other but on slightly different wind lines. The pilot does NOT have to decide which target they will fly to and will be scored to any of the targets where a marker is thrown or the closest measurement of a target to their track with logger scoring.

This task may sound simple, but it is called Hesitation for a reason! Shifting winds and more tasks downwind can cause indecision for competitors in choosing a goal and choosing the wrong goal can have negative effects on successive tasks.

15.4 FLY IN (FIN)xe "FLY IN (FIN)"

15. 4.1

Competitors find their own launch areas and attempt to achieve a mark or valid track point close to a set goal or target.

15. 4.2

Task Data:

Position of set of goal/target

Minimum and maximum distances of ILP to the goal/target

Number of take-offs permitted

15. 4.3

The result is the distance from the mark or closest valid track point to the target, if displayed, or goal. Smallest result is best.

15. 4.4

Only one scoring attempt (marker drop) may be made.

In events without logger scoring, a contest landing shall be declared as such to the appointed observer at the earliest opportunity

A Fly In task (FIN) may be the most common task called at events around the world of varying skill levels. Usually set at the main field of the festival where large crowds come to see balloons, the FIN is most often a hard target (meaning a fabric 'X' is displayed, rather than a goal which is only GPS scoring) and has a set scoring area within a radius or the confines of the field as set by the Director.

This task is essentially a JDG but is typically the very first task in order on the sheet and pilots have their choice of launch areas. The critical thing to watch is the minimum and/or maximum distances from the target to launch, as well as waiver restrictions on altitudes approaching the target over crowds, tents, Ferris wheels, etc.

A FIN can often be combined with another task set on the same launch field requiring throwing one or two markers in other set areas. We will discuss those tasks a bit later.

15.5 FLY ON (FON)xe "FLY ON (FON)"

15.1 5.1

Competitors will attempt to achieve a mark or valid track point close to a goal selected and declared by them during flight.

15.2 5.2

Task Data:

Method of declaration (also see 12.3 and Appendix G)

Number of goals permitted

Goals available for declaration

Minimum and maximum distance between previous mark and declared goal

15.3 5.3

The result is the distance from the mark or closest valid track point to the nearest valid declared goal. Smallest result is best.

A Fly On tasks (FON) is another task that was much more common in the days of observers and provides challenges for organizers in finding alternative methods to accommodate all of the variables. Always placed after another task (such as a FIN, JDG or HWZ), the pilot has up until a certain point set by the director to declare what their next target will be. This point is generally the result on the task prior.

With a marker thrown on the task prior, the pilot can write the goal number or coordinates on the tail of the marker for the officials to record. This declaration goal must satisfy any minimum/maximum distance requirements on the task sheet and the Director may stipulate whether a set list of goals must be used or if the pilot can choose any coordinate.

The challenge for the event is to also provide a method for the pilot to make a FON declaration if they are not able to get a marker in on the previous task. Typically a declaration can be made as early as the briefing to an official. It is also common for the event to provide a staff member at a remote location to accept declarations from a pilot or crew member. It is critical for a crew

member to be at this declaration point ready to change the pilot's declaration at a moment's notice prior to them achieving a result on the previous task. Declarations turned in after a result is achieved there will not count and the pilot will be scored to the previous declaration or receive a No Result if none had been turned in. If the crew turns in a declaration but the pilot does get a marker in on the previous tasks, the marker declaration will prevail. It is critical to communicate effectively with your crew on any declaration tasks.