



Minutes of 1st FRA General Meeting 20/09/03

Present:

John Reason, Ian Lewis, Kevin Scott, John Findlay, James Baker, Mike Lambert, Arthur Chilcott, Andy Kane, Sam Jones, David Young, Craig Danby, Stuart Barnwell and Ed Hoppit.

Apologies were received from:

Tony Somerfield, Andrew Marchant, Adam Emmett, John Heatlie, Andrew Rayner, Simon Scott, Paul Hunt and Paul Cooper.

Opening address:

- Joe Shaw, a producer for Robot Wars wished the FRA well for its future.
- A statement was made about the good progress made this last year with pit sizing and layouts, and the fact that they were a lot safer environments to be in.
- It was discussed that without TV the FRA was possibly the best way of keeping the sport going, in the long term.
- A temporary voting system was discussed to enable the FRA to conduct its business in the short term, before a full constitution is decided on.
Voting is to be made up of 13 votes, 10 roboteers and three executives.
The minimum number of voting members to make a quorum is 5
This was carried unanimously.
- The aims of the association which are published on the website are to be further clarified after discussion with a wider membership in 2004.

Event Reports:

Newark 2003: Report of some flimsy tables, and potential problems with table collapses. KS has raised this with the event promoter and a solution is being discussed for next year.

Macclesfield 2003: Nothing to report

Kettering 2003: Reports of a large number of people with pit passes and no robot turned out to be an eleven-man team, JF said that this had been dealt with. JF also mentioned that this event had the largest amount of space per robot ever.

Events Calendar:

There is a healthy event schedule for the rest of 2003 of approx 10 events. There is also much potential for 2004. It was discussed that we must do our utmost to try and help to organise/promote this and that we should consider a permanent post to the RW forum asking potential organisers to contact us prior to advertising. SJ agreed to contact Adam Clark to see if this was possible.

Please see attached sheet for dates and initial classification of events planned.

Safety:

- Yeovil Steam Rally was discussed because of an incident within a class 3 unroofed arena, where a beer barrel is alleged to have been almost thrown into the public area. This was decided to have been an incident that we must deal with.
The organiser of this event is to be invited to attend our meetings, IL agreed to make contact and report back.
- The tethering trial of axes and flippers was discussed and the adding of this to safety requirements put to vote. SJ raised concerns that we would need guidelines for these and ML agreed to provide them. It was also discussed that we would need to advise on

acceptable materials and suggest a supplier, it was agreed that we should approach Technobots for assistance in this area. AC raised the point that materials other than steel may need discussing, it was agreed that these could be suggested and allowed once tested and proved safe.

A unanimous vote on compulsory tethering of all axes and flippers for the open circuit as of 1/01/2004 was carried.

- The arrival of high flow flippers and axes was discussed. With the advent of these high-powered machines it was considered that they are too powerful to compete in class 3 arenas. It was discussed that we will need to provide a consistent approach to how these machines are dealt with using the classification of spinners as a starting point. SJ and EH raised the fact that spinners had been banned from anything below class 2 arenas, and that possibly flippers and axes should now also be. ML felt that we should provide a guideline on power level allowable and advise restricting flow rather than blanket ban. This was agreed on the provision that we also looked in to providing a power level guide for spinners, allowing them to “throttle back” and ensuring a consistent approach. ML agreed to research and produce guidelines for pneumatic systems, and KS and JB agreed to research and produce spinner guidelines. Admittance of high flow pneumatic systems to an event must be at the discretion of the event organiser at this stage.

Ants, Featherweights and Middleweights:

Our representatives for the above weights joined us for the first time and their input was warmly received.

Ants: There appears to be some discords within the ant community with regards to a standard set of build rules, with rules often changing from month to month and event to event. CD agreed to seek a clarification of a common set of rules and submit them to the FRA, rule changes will then be proposed as required and ratified at normal FRA meeting intervals. It is hoped this may alleviate the pressure of instant rule changes, and provide more consistency from event to event.

It was requested that when ant weights attend heavy weight meetings that they could have the lowest eight crystal frequencies assigned to them on a permanent basis. JF will look into this and advise whether this is possible.

Feathers: It was believed that due to the continual moving forward of featherweight technology, these machines are becoming extremely powerful, especially spinners and flippers. It was agreed that we must continue to watch developments carefully and that roboteers need to accept that they only have arena access at the event organisers discretion. Clarification on featherweight gas bottle guidelines was discussed, with the conclusion that they need certification and a burst disc fitted. SJ suggested that interested parties should consult the FRA technical pneumatic specialist Paul Cooper for further clarification.

Middle weights: It was discussed how we could encourage this weight class and concluded that event organisers need to promote them more heavily and actually invite middleweights to events. IL suggested that possibly Robots Are Us Raptors could be allowed to compete at this weight, it was decided that this would be unfair due to a 20kilo weight difference between Raptors and middleweights at this time.

Insurance:

Despite a lot of refusals from insurance companies to insure the FRA and its members, it is our intention to continue trying. Our association has not been offered one quotation yet, and reasons for this were discussed. Alternative providers were brought up and JB suggested contacting specialist sport insurers as an alternative. SJ suggested we might wish to try and find an insurance advisor within the roboteer community in order that we can try and glean some advice. AK has agreed to continue pursuing insurance.

Website:

It was announced that our website is now running on the correct address at www.fightingrobots.co.uk and that we should now try and build traffic and resources at this address.

Web site development will now be accelerated. EH raised the fact that not all events were represented on the site and it was agreed that all event organisers and weight representatives need to pass on their logo's etc so that they may be included. Developments to the website discussed included:

- Provision of contact emails
- Publishing of event calendar
- Writing and publishing of event reports

SJ agreed to work on this in conjunction with Andrew Rayner, and suggested that possibly the site could be passed to SB for further development.

Event organisers:

All present event organisers expressed their reconfirmation that from 1/1/04 that they will be operating and abiding by the FRA event safety rules and robot build guidelines. It was discussed that support for these needs to be more open and all agreed to start promoting as required.

For roboteers this means that common standards now apply throughout the majority of UK events.

FRA launch:

It was unanimously agreed that we should formally launch our association with effect 1/1/04 and get a secure data base up and running in conjunction with the event organiser's roboteer listings.

With insurance being a problem in the short term it was decided, that a temporary class of membership would be created. This membership would be called associate membership and would be available for £5 per team. We are grateful to JF who has offered to collect these monies, when seeking Roaming Robots membership fees for 2004. On quick calculation at the meeting, an amount of approx £500 can be raised for the associations running expenses through these means.

If and when Insurance is obtained we will have to go back to the membership for more funds to cover this thus, changing the membership to a full member category.

Some of the delegates present wanted to make a further donation to get the FRA up and running on a sound financial footing. It was suggested that people making donations may be recognised later in a membership category, that of founder member.

It was agreed that all FRA events would require teams to be FRA members in order for them to participate in their events.

The FRA constitution is still in development and is an immense task, it was agreed that it could be written and presented to the association in reasonable sized parts for scrutiny. We are grateful to EH who has agreed to suggest items and edit this document.

It was mentioned by a regional chairman that we should send out some suggestions on what is required of a regional chairman. A letter will be sent shortly with proposals for consultation.

International cooperation:

With emails coming to us from as far as South Africa there appears to be a great interest in what we are doing. ML is having talks with our near continental cousins about them using our rules and guide lines on a formal basis.

A.O.B:

A definition of who is classed as an event organiser was asked for by JB, and a new member put forward. After discussion it was concluded that only organisers who organised public

events should participate in FRA meetings, but that we would provide resources and encouragement for all such requests.