THE OFFICIALS
UNITED STATES GRAND PRIX NEWSLETTER

TALKING WEATHER WITH WHITING

BY LYNNE HUNTTING

This year with the weather reports not being so lovely, a Marshal Evacuation Plan has been written. There are 34 Stations which have sturdy but metal stands and metal catch fencing, with few, if any, other buildings nearby. And this is Prarie Country.



Charlie Whiting, FIA F1 Race Director, Safety Delegate and Starter, said he's "never come across an evacuation plan before for marshals and spectators based on weather. It's the first time I've ever heard. And I understand it's due to the likelihood of significant lightning events. I understand it could get quite bad and spectators might be asked to evacuate. If we get to the point where we're going to have that much lightning, the chances are we wouldn't be racing on the track anyway. So the chances of having to stop practice or the races because the marshals can no longer work… I think we would stop racing before that.

"I've never faced the likelihood that marshals would have to leave their posts because of lightning. This is a first for me. But you do the job. There's always something new. That's why we try to have accurate forecasters.

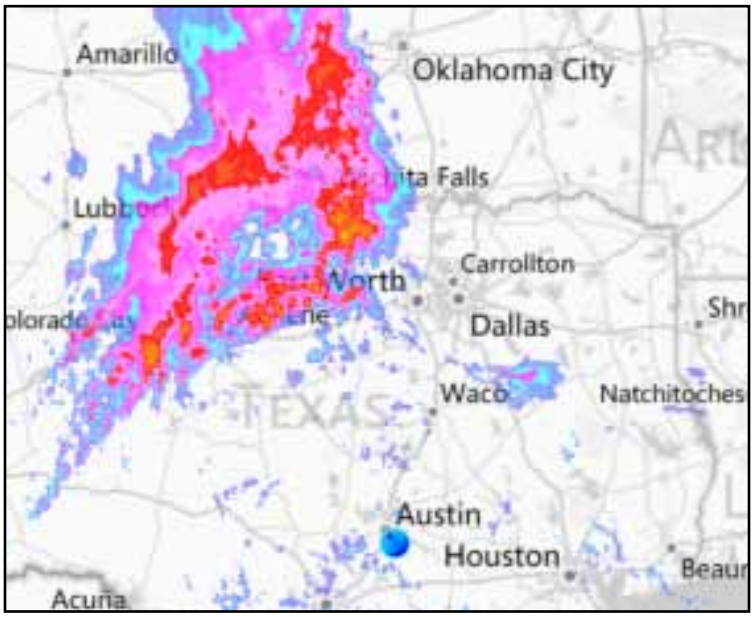
FIA brings three of its own meteorologists to each F1 race, has its own weather radar station set up five to six miles away and three skillful technicians at the circuit. The information is shared with all the teams via the FIA network.

The plans include clearly defined parameters, calling for the forecast lightning to be watched with time frames in mind. When the storm is a designated number of miles/minutes away, the Plan will be implemented, and then at another designated point the Marshals will be brought from their posts to a safe location.



With strictly coordinated efforts, the evacuation, as designed, will take 10-15 minutes to effect, and 40 minutes to return marshals to station.

Fingers crossed, this plan won't have to be utilized.



WHO WE ARE: AN OVERVIEW



This year's marshals are a diverse group. Joining the ranks of Americans from 29 states and the District of Columbia are marshals from eleven foreign countries. Look for displays of country and state flags, at meetings and/or on the Turn Station fencing.

Not surprisingly, Texas leads the way with 140 marshals in all specialties. Among the Yankees are 24 from California. Michigan ranks third with 20.

England leads the marshal numbers from overseas with upwards of fifteen, if the addresses are correctly deciphered. Other countries represented are Abu Dhabi, Australia, Canada, France, Ireland, The Netherlands, Scotland, Singapore, Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates.

The F&C Chief, Bill Armitage, estimates that 30-40 percent of the F&C marshals have worked all four of the USGP's at COTA. Conversely there are about a dozen newbies working their first race. Many are younger, the future of the sport, and are to be embraced.

The youngest marshal might very well be Bill Van de Sandt who turned 18 last week. He worked Registration setup Wednesday and will be an Intervention Marshal at Station 18. As for the oldest marshal, I'm not going there.



MEET THE CHIEFS: RACE CHAIR & FLAGGING

BY LYNNE HUNTTING

While this year marks the first of the four years for USGP at COTA to have a corps of all-returning Specialty Chiefs corps, there is one change With the passing of the previous Race Chairman, Bob Pierson, that role has been redefined. Bill Armitage, the current/returning F&C Chief will also be assuming the role of Race Chairman. His very able assistant is Sydney Davis, who has much experience in managing racing events, both on the club level as well in professional racing.

First in a series on our Specialty Chiefs

This year Bill Armitage is wearing two hats - Flag Chief and Race Director, a role to which he's not unfamiliar. While this is first such experience at Formula One, he Bill has previously done so at other American Pro races. His Project Manager work experience with his own company holds him in good stead. His race experience includes Flag Chief at two FIA events this year - Moto GP Indianapolis Motor Speedway and FIA WEC at COTA.

This is Bill's second year as USGP Flag Chief at COTA, so he brings continuity to that role. He has the 'luxury' (if one can call this a luxury) of having his previous Chief experience at COTA, which will allow him to replicate rather than have to create procedures. After last year's USGP, Bill gave out Evaluation Forms to the crew, and had the Marshals evaluate their own experiences and that with of their chiefs/captains; and for those in charge, evaluations of those under their jurisdiction. Bill plans on doing that again this year, online, to make it easier for all to provide evaluations. He said he received great input and information, which he is incorporating for this year's event, which is in Year Four.

One upside of having such feedback and input allows for the joys of cross-pollination. Many marshals have come from other countries, and conversely, American marshals go to overseas events. One such valuable input came from Al Woodward, who is Corner Captain at Station 13. He brought back the Incident Report Form from the British Grand Prix, which utilizes check boxes instead of essays. Brilliant. Bill adopted the idea, and such a Report Form was quickly designed by Assistant Race Chairman, Sydney Davis. Ed Kakijo brought back a CAMS F&C manual from the Australian Grand Prix, and Bill plans to utilize some of those insights.

Other feedback is producing some positives for the marshals this year, including the popular Group Photo outside the tent Sunday morning, with state/country flags for those who brought them. Those flags can also be tastefully displayed on the fencing at the stations.

Bill brings a different mentality to his roles, and he's thinking outside the box.

The open lines of communication this year included a Dropbox account set up for the team, which made it possible



to disseminate information and promote dialogue. The first USGP webinar for 35 of the newer marshals was done a couple of weeks ago, covering basic information. This was initiated by Mary Carneiro, who is working Station 12. The plan was for the live session to be led by a Flagger rather than a Chief, and it went over well. Bill would like to do more such video training in future.

Other new training this year included the F&C Captains being invited to the F1 Medical Exercise Thursday afternoon, MRV familiarization session, meeting with the Porsche GT Cup teams and attending its medical exercise.

Making the station assignments was no easy task, taking more than 16-hours. This year the team is quite full, 246 marshals - more than last year. Bill put in a lot of thought, taking into consideration whenever possible the feedback received from last year. The marshals are all assigned to a given Station, and for Formula One, there are designated marshals. While the Corner Captains make the other assignments, Bill encourages rotation among the marshals for the Support Series - Porsche GT3 Cup Series, and the Masters Historic Formula One Series. This will provide for all to gain experience in the various roles.

Last year the USGP was the first race to utilize the Virtual Safety Car procedure, which had been in Beta mode during the year. After the tragic death of F1 driver Jules Bianchi, VSC was done and Marshal Intervention was restricted. This year Marshal Intervention will be done the European way.



MEET THE CHIEFS CONTINUED

Each Station will have a TSP Board and designated operator who is wearing a radio. The VSC light on the TSP Board is operated by Race Control, but the TSP operator controls all the other lights, appropriately for the individual corner situation. Whereas marshals use flag to flag scope, the TSP VSC scope is light to light. While that may sound like overlapping, it allows for necessary coverage.

Due to the coverage needed over the long and circuitous elevated road course, Bill has three Sector Marshals this year: Jake Davis, Willie Perez, and Ron Walsh. COTA is 3.426 miles long,inside and outside rings, and has elevation changes of 133 feet up into Turn One. The course has 20 Stations/34 separate posts, with only three cross-over sites: Alpha Station, Station 5A Tunnel and Station 15. The Sector Marshals will be roaming, which allows for better supervision where needed. The number of marshals needed at each Station ranges from six to nine at the five largest turns (#1, 11, 12, 19 and 20.)









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