MASUREL, LEMORDANT IN THE FRAY FOR TOP SPOT AT DUBAI GAMES

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The French duo of **Olivier Masurel** and **Aude Lemordant** were involved in a keen contest for top honours in the aerobatic competition at the end of the second day of the **2015 World Air Games** (WAG) at the Skydive Dubai drop-zone.

Masurel and Lemordant — the only female pilot in this category — are part of a select eight-member group of pilots who have been hand-picked to participate in the demanding competition. The competition aeroplanes — each costing in excess of 500,000 euros (approximately Dh2 million) — have been specially flown in for this event by the pilots.

Aerobatics has been performed almost since the first flight of a powered aircraft. In the early years

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before World War I, aerobatics served as entertainment for crowds fascinated by the new aerial machines. However, later aerobatics became essential in a military pilot's training that could be utilised during combat situations. Today, aerobatics is seen as among the most important and essential elements in making the pilot better in control of the aircraft. The competition is normally held in two categories, powered planes or gliders.

In an aerobatics competition, the pilot performs rolls and dives that put his or her body through positive forces up to nine times the gravitational force. But while going through the manoeuvres, the negative 'G-force' pushes all the blood to the brain, making it necessary for the participants to manage the plane's control and stay oriented enough to go through the routines.

Masurel heads the leaderboard with a score of 3,366.81 points for a 76.345 per cent tally, followed by Lemordant with a total of 3,299.05 points for a 74.808 per cent tally, while Mikhail Mamistov of Russia is in third with 3,284.75 points and a percentage of 74.484.

Sponsored by watchmaker Breitling, Lemordant is the only woman in the field. But the 31-year-old knows she can hold her own and go for the title. "I am confident I can go all the way," Lemordant — a Boeing 777 pilot with Air France — told 'Gulf News'.

"We have the best of the best pilots here, so the only thing we can be assured of is the tough competition over the next few days."

Russia's Mamistov, currently third in the overall standings, Poland's Artur Kielak, Nigel Hopkins of South Africa, American Rob Holland and Martin Sonka of the Czech Republic are the other notable entries in the fray.

Meanwhile, the paraglider competition also got underway at the beach drop-zone with reigning world champion Matiaz Feraric of Slovenia staying clear of the field despite a slight miscalculation on his first jump. The jumper from Slovenia struggled to judge wind conditions properly and landed a mere 28cm away from the bull's eye target.

In the paraglider competition, pilots are towed up into the sky over the beach with a winch while also wearing a stud on their shoe that helps detect the electronic landing mat. Unlike accuracy parachuting, paraglider pilots have their wings giving them greater control, and must land on their feet to make their scores count.

All participants need to make a mandatory 12 jumps, and at the end they are allowed to discard one score before the final top three finishers are announced.

The First UAE International Symposium on Air Sport Medicine will take place at the Meydan Hotel from Friday morning. A part of the 2015 FAI World Air Games and done in coordination with the FAI Medical Commission, the symposium will seek to have a fruitful exchange of knowledge and expertise between medical personnel involved in aviation medicine, with specific focus on medicine in extreme situations in air sports and in other fields of aviation.

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