

STANDARDIZATION OF CONTEST RULES

By FRITZ COMPTON

PRACTICALLY all competitive sports in this country have standardized rules which form a permanent basis for competition, and are subject to only an occasional change over a period of years. With the probable advent of numerous regional soaring contests during the coming year, as well as the national contest, it would appear that soaring competition is in dire need of some standard basic contest rules.

The past thirteen national contests have been conducted under many and various rules and scoring regulations, some contests awarding points for ships, points for pilots, various contest flight minimums from 500 feet altitude to 3,500 feet and 35 miles, division of pilots into 2 to 4 classes, computation of points by different formulae each year, various and sundry bonus point awards, points for ground speed, (the point value of which was changed in the middle of the 13th National Contest, as well as the introduction of points for duration after the beginning of the contest).

It is difficult to imagine that sailboat racing, football, or baseball would prosper under such vacillating contest rules. Soaring needs to standardize and stabilize (and possibly simplify) its regulations governing contests. This would assist its healthy growth, as well as give soaring a dignified position in the world of sports.

The following observations and proposed contest rules are not presented as a solution but merely to stimulate interest in this problem among the sailplane pilots.

Contest rules can be divided into two distinct parts: "General Contest Rules," governing the entry of pilots and planes, license requirements, waivers, etc., and "Contest Flight & Point Award Regulations." General contest rules should be basic, permitting regional contests to add such minor regulations as may be required by local topography, launching facilities, etc. Contest Flight & Point Award Regulations should be detailed and rigidly uniform for all contests. This would permit pilots to operate under familiar rules, would make possible the accurate comparison of the performance of pilots and planes, as well as soaring conditions in different regions, and would, on a year to year basis, show the improvement of soaring technique and equipment in the various regional and national contests.

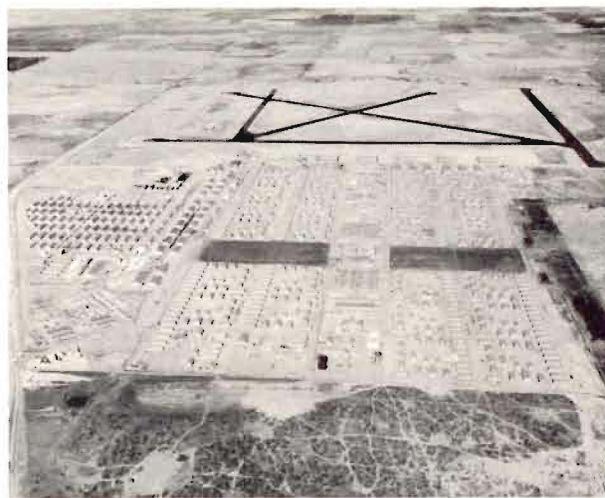
A tabulation of the results of the 13th National Contest shows that the scores of the contestants were greatly distorted by the award of bonus points and concealed the actual performance of pilots and planes. For example, with bonus points, the placement of contestants was as follows: Robinson, Compton, Waters, Charles, See. On the basis of points earned by flight performance only, excluding bonus points, results are: Robinson, Parker, McHenry, Charles, See. This brings to light several hidden facts: Small span sailplanes won the first two places, and McHenry turned in the best performance among the LK's.

The inclusion of bonus points with performance

points is evidently intended to stimulate interest among the contestants in breaking national records and acquiring Silver and Golden "C" legs. It is believed that a sailplane pilot truly interested in the sport needs no stimulation to do his utmost other than the honor of the national record or certificate, and that the resultant distortion of contest results is not worth the doubtful inducement. In fact, the award of bonus points for these performances may, in some cases, have the reverse effect—pilots in various regions might defer attempting to get their Silver "C" until they can attend a national contest, because of the bonus offered.

The 1946 Western Championship Soaring Contest used a point award system based on fixed points per unit of altitude and unit of distance. The 1946 National Contest used a formula involving daily performance ratios. This system had numerous disadvantages—the computation of points could not begin until all barographs were in (sometimes the following day); contestants could not readily check or estimate their score for each day's flying; and computation of scores was rather involved and errors did occur.

Further, the ratio system encouraged the contestants to put forth their greatest efforts on "ghosting" flights—flights just in excess of contest minimums, on very poor days. If a contestant could get away on a poor day for a flight of 5 miles or more, and no one else made a contest flight, he would garner 300 points—more than was made on some flights of over 100 miles. This did happen one day. However, the contestant cannot be criticized for taking full advantage of all opportunities. This system puts the emphasis on short flights on poor



The Wichita Falls Municipal Airport, scene of the 1947 National Soaring Contest. Runways are 6200 ft. (NW-SE), 5400 ft. (N-S), 4800 ft. (NE-SW), 5400 ft. (E-W), and a taxi strip 4300 ft. (N-S). Adequate hangar and barracks are available to house all sailplanes, pilots and crews.