

SCORING for *Soaring*

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IN THE November-December issue of "SOARING" Fritz Compton put forth a complete set of revised contest rules. This article will discuss some of the points at issue in a more general way, reinforcing Compton's position in many instances, presenting arguments for a slightly different position in other places, and adding some additional material.

The main "bone of contention" is the set of rules used for the 1946 National Soaring Contest. Before the contest they appeared to be fairly well founded and were doubtless the result of earnest effort and application on the part of a number of well informed people. The rules were applied during the contest as fairly and as thoroughly as could possibly have been hoped. However, in the light of experience gained, the "Method of Computing Points" proved to be cumbersome, slow, and impractical. Further, the method did not always fairly reward the soaring accomplishments of the pilots.

A sliding scale theoretically sounds pretty good, but in reality it leaves more to chance than a fixed point scoring system. On a poor day the pilot who happens to make contact with one of the few workable thermals that drift over the soaring site can easily ring up the longest flight of the day even though he is of only mediocre ability. For him there is no problem of navigation and no long retrieving haul to sap his energy for the next day. On the other hand on a good day ability really pays off. You can't eliminate luck completely, but the distances traveled and the altitudes attained more nearly reflect the ability of the pilots and the performance of their craft. They should not be compared on a sliding scale with the results of a poor day in such a way that 200 miles and 20 miles, 10,000 feet and 1,000 feet receive the same credit. What is needed is a simplified, accurate, and equal fixed point system which permits the contestant to know just about where he stands by the time of the pilots' meeting the following day. If launching facilities are adequate, and there is no excuse for their not being so in the future, every pilot should have an equal chance every day.

The system should not be over-simplified, however. Take the case of ground speed. A pilot that soars 100 miles at 30 miles per hour has made a better flight than one who soars the same 100 miles on the same day with an average ground speed of only 15 miles per hour, assuming they both reached the same maximum altitude. "How about the relative speed performance of their ships?", you say. To answer that perhaps we'd better get back to basic issues.

Gliding and soaring in any country are most easily evaluated by noting that country's national records, the number of Silver and Golden "C"s earned, and the number of gliders and sailplanes registered.

Soaring contests have in the past and should continue in the future to aid in improving our national standing in the soaring world in the following ways:

1. They should provide publicity for the promotion of soaring.
2. They should encourage the breaking of national and international records.
3. They should encourage the earning of "C"s, Silver "C"s, and Golden "C"s.
4. They should encourage the development of more and higher performance sailplanes.
5. They should encourage the licensing of gliders and pilots with the Civil Aeronautics Authority.
6. They should serve as a stimulus to all those who attend to keep up their interest in gliding.
7. They should aid in the development of comradeship in a common cause.

Of course, to serve as a focal point for the meet and as a goal for all to aim at, a champion for the area covered by the meet should be named on the basis of performances turned in.

The point award system is designed to evaluate performance, and the goal of the point award system should be to give the most points to the best pilot and sailplane combination in the simplest and most efficient way possible.

In short, if we are going to have more and better sailplanes to raise the national records and increase the number of Silver and Golden "C"s we cannot handicap a pilot for the high performance of his ship in any way.

To get back to ground speed, a ship with a high cruising speed is often one that also has a high minimum sink with the result that it cannot start quite as early, get quite as high, or stay up quite as late in the day, as a low sink ship. However, it can travel fast and on an exceptional day it can go a great distance. If we are ever going 465 miles to break the present world singleplace record held by the Russians, we've got to go fast. If no account is taken of ground speed, the fast ship will operate at a disadvantage on all but very good days. It should be allowed to at least partially make up in ground speed what it may lack in altitude gaining ability. High speed soaring is in itself an art and not necessarily dependent on the type of ship used. When it pays off it can result in long flights, but when thermals temporarily give out, the pilot is apt to be at a lower altitude than a high slow soarer and the fast flight may end abruptly.

Speed points should be awarded on the basis of how long the speed was maintained. A fairly simple way of doing this would be to make the ground speed a percent of the total distance points awarded for the flight (i.e. divide the ground speed by 100, multiply by the distance flown, and you have the speed points earned). If a pilot flies 110 miles at 30 mph under a point a mile system he would receive 110 points for distance. Now take 30% of 110 and you have 33 speed points. Now if he reached an altitude of 3000 feet above release in the course of the flight, at a point for every 100 feet, he would receive 30 altitude points giving