

# Comments on Contest Rules

By FRITZ COMPTON

THERE were printed in the previous issue, the rules for the National contest at Wichita Falls. These rules were determined in their final form by the Executive Committee of the SSA and were based upon Draft No. 4 of proposed standardized contest rules.

It is believed that it would be well to relate the development of the proposed standardized rules to date and explain the purpose and intent of a few of the Wichita Falls rules which may not be immediately apparent.

After the first proposal for standardizing contest rules, with request for comment and ideas, there was little response. The second draft was based upon suggestions and rules used at the Southeastern States Soaring Contest at Sanford, Florida. Copies of this draft were given best circulation possible and comment requested. In this same manner subsequent drafts were prepared and circulated.

With the third draft it became apparent that the situation had not yet become sufficiently stabilized for the proposal of any permanent rules without the possibility of frequent revisions and misunderstandings. Therefore, in Draft No. 3, the rules were presented in the form of unofficial "Suggested Standard Contest Rules" based upon the expressions received. Many paragraphs of the third draft were presented in multiple alternate forms when general agreement or practical solution was not possible and some form of compromise was necessary.

It was possible to contact only a small portion of the SSA membership with the means available, but an attempt was made to distribute the drafts to a typical cross-section of the membership. The contest at Wichita Falls will permit everyone to study carefully the operation of these rules in their present state of development, and if contestants will freely comment and present their ideas, it will be possible to prepare an improved fifth draft of "Suggested Standard Contest Rules" as an unofficial guide to the committees and officials of the SSA, presenting the collective opinion of the contestants.

As work on the various drafts progressed, the importance of the individual paragraphs, particularly of the contest point award regulations, as such, faded into the background and there came clearly to the fore, out of the original cloud of confusion, a very sharp picture of the basic rational concepts upon which contest point award regulations should be premised. This picture was brought into sharper definition with each suggestion received and appears to be the common denominator by which all point award regulations should be evaluated. I shall try to enumerate and explain below:

1. Contest points, to serve their true purpose, should be kept pure and unadulterated, and used solely for determining the standing of contestants in soaring competition.
2. Contest points should be awarded on the basis of contestant performance in soaring competition. The contest point value given each unit of achievement in each of the performance categories

(duration, altitude, distance) should be in reasonable proportion to the soaring ability and effort required, as well as the quality of such achievement.

3. No contestant should be penalized or handicapped for flying a sailplane capable of superior performance in any or all categories when coupled with his own skill. However, point award regulations should not award contest points in such a manner as to unduly accentuate particular performance abilities or particular sailplanes, thus awarding contest points principally for sailplane design characteristics rather than contestant ability combined with sailplane performance.

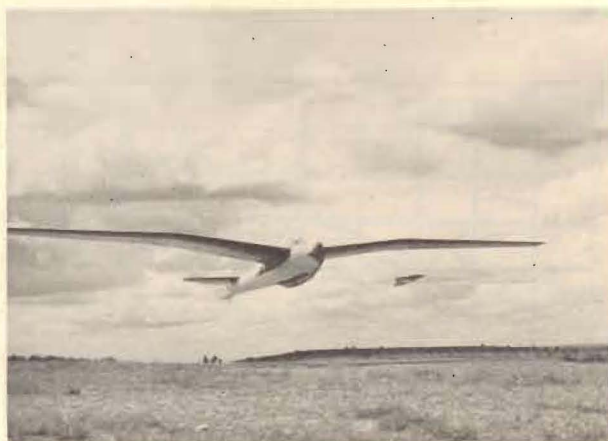
Everyone is most anxious to see the present national records greatly extended and some of the international records brought home to this country. This is most commendable. However, records cannot be made by the writing of contest rules, but only by the sweat, effort, and burning desire of a contestant to establish a new record. In our anxiety to prod contestants into doing their utmost, we too often reach for the nearest monetary stimulate available, the contest points.

Thus, contest points are adulterated. They are no longer used solely for determining the relative standing of contestants in soaring competition, but become a pawn upon the altar of record breaking. Contest rules are distorted and the champion record breaker, instead of the champion soaring pilot, could become the national soaring champion.

If contest point award regulations were set up to give greatly increased points whenever a record is exceeded, they would, of necessity, be subject to constant revision as records were broken. There could be no standardization under such a system.

The "Suggested Standard Contest Rules," as well as the Wichita Falls Rules, attempt to preserve the purity and purpose of the contest points. A record point sys-

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Johnny Robinson and the Zanonla — the combination to beat at Wichita Falls.