

NATIONAL CONTEST RULES

By FRITZ COMPTON

THE recent National Contest at Wichita Falls revealed many weak spots in the National Contest rules. The following proposed rules for the 1948 Nationals are based upon observations there, "hangar flying," and more recent comments, and are presented for your general comment and criticism.

We must keep in mind at all times that contest points, to serve their true purpose, must be used solely for determining the standing of contestants in soaring competition, and therefore awarded only on the basis of contestant soaring performances.

We should not try to copy blindly European contest rules. Their activities are to a great degree subsidized and conducted through gliding clubs. Our activities are dependent upon individual owners and private financing. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that our rules should differ somewhat. To accommodate clubs, the proposed rules do provide for a club to enter a glider and be considered in the same light as an individual contestant and glider.

It will be noted that Duration has been dropped. At Wichita Falls, few, if any of the active contestants gave any thought to points in this category. It was always imperative to contact the ground crew early and begin the retrieve for sake of rest. While Duration will undoubtedly be useful in regional contests, especially those involving no cross-country flying, it appears to be obsolete in national competitions.

The system used at Wichita Falls to provide a day of rest following a flight in excess of 200 miles was found lacking in two ways. It failed to provide sufficient rest to active contestants who flew a little less than 200 miles on many consecutive days, and there was considerable objection to awarding points for other than actual flight performances, especially since the rule could cause a considerable difference in score between two pilots, if one flew 190 miles and the other 200, with the 190-mile pilot making only an average flight the following day while the 200-miler rested.

Some system for adequate rest is imperative. It was not pleasant to see the handful of serious contestants at Wichita Falls on the last few days of the meet, with red, flushed faces, and sunken eyes after successive all-night retrieves. In one instance, a contestant was shaking so badly before take-off that he had to clutch his barograph with both hands to hold it.

Our sport requires skill and an alert mind, but our competitions are now on the basis of physical endurance and *quantity* of performance. Wichita Falls has clearly indicated the need to change from quantity to *quality*. I know of no other sport involving such highly specialized skill that does not permit contestants adequate rest.



FRITZ COMPTON

Chairman of the SSA Contest Committee

This weakness in our contest rules is the result of the evolution of good, high-performance sailplanes, and large numbers of pilots capable of long cross-country flights, while our rules remain a carry-over from rules of early contests, when ridge soaring, occasional modest distance flights, and quantity of performance were used to determine contestant ability and adequate rest was no problem. But now our fast sailplanes and able pilots, dashing across three states in a single flight, have made rest a paramount factor, and thus quality of performance far more important than quantity.

Accordingly, provision is made in the proposed 1948 Rules for each contestant's final score to be the sum of his 5 best contest flights. This puts the burden of when to fly and when to rest directly upon the judgment of each contestant. Various systems have been proposed for flying two days out of three, or every other day, but this might ground a pilot when he is rested and eager to fly. It still will not prevent a contestant from attaining additional benefit from a well-organized ground crew, as his efficient crew will permit him to take advantage of several successive days of good soaring weather.

It might be claimed that a contestant displays his skill in short flights on very poor days. This he does, for a short period of time, if he is lucky enough to be in line for take-off at the right moment. In 1946 at Elmira, two days produced one contest flight each. The order of take-off was a considerable factor in these cases.