

Distance flights have not only made obsolete the rules relative to duration and rest, but have also become the real factor in determining a champion. Long distance is the product of a pilot's skillful achievement and use of altitude gained, maximum duration until the last weak thermal, and maximum possible speed in his battle against time. These abilities and performances must be backed by good judgment in crossing the weak spots, difficult terrain, and appraising changing meteorological conditions. Therein you have the champion.

A 200-mile flight usually involves many changes in the weather, wind, terrain, and nature of thermal activity, and the distance pilot must best them all. Speed receives its proper reward in distance flying, as the pilot who is not its master will not go the greatest distance.

Altitude is included in these rules, with 1 point per 100 feet, all the way up. If I were writing these rules according to my own wishes, I would omit altitude entirely from contest points in national contests, although it serves a good purpose in regional meets. The higher altitudes involve thunderstorm flight, require good instrument experience, oxygen, instruments, and introduce a degree of hazard not consistent with our boasts of safety in our contests. In a contest in Germany, I am told, some 7 Minimoas entered a thunderstorm, the majority were destroyed and several pilots were killed. When the international altitude record was established in Germany, another ship of the same type disintegrated in the same up-current. The situation becomes one of survival, and it is possible that high altitude flights may come to be considered in the same classification as record-breaking, i.e., the object of special expeditions, with ample equipment, pilot experience, and a full understanding of the difficulties involved.

It is believed that altitude-gaining ability is more important, as reflected directly in distance flown. The pilot with superior skill in bracketing thermals, and the one who can achieve greatest rate of climb in moderate clouds, is rewarded properly with contest points when he converts such extra altitude into extra distance. Points for altitude force a pilot to squeeze out successive new high points in the weak tops of thermals, thus sacrificing speed, which is so necessary in producing greater distances. The omission of points for altitude would in no way reduce the advantage attained by an experienced pilot if he took a ride to 20,000 feet and converted the resultant altitude into a fast, 80-mile glide. Again, the reward is in distance which is always the net product of altitude, speed, and duration.

The system of rotation of take-off order at Wichita Falls seemed to be satisfactory. However, the inclusion of all entrants as contestants made the take-off line very long and it was definitely unfair to make the serious contestant await the take-off of the casual non-serious contenders. Towards the end of the contest, only a dozen were still interested in competition and those who were carrying on often were forced to spend most of the morning in line before their turn came to be towed aloft.

Various solutions have been suggested. One is a national contest for only regional contest winners, or Silver and Golden "C" holders. Inasmuch as a "C" pilot without previous contest experience led the field for almost a week at Wichita Falls, it appears that such a system would be unfair to able newcomers. Also, since the National Contest is the greatest social and competitive gathering of the soaring clan, entrance to it should not be restricted.

The proposed rules provide for all entrants to declare themselves either "contestant" pilots or "participating" pilots. Only "contestant" pilots compete for contest points and participate in the point award fund. "Contestant" pilots must maintain a reasonable standing in competition or be transferred to participating status. "Contestant" pilots have priority for take-off on contest flights.

The "participating" pilots will have activities planned for them at the contest site, special prizes and awards. They will be a great factor in keeping the contest site active every afternoon and in attracting a worth-

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Ft. Lt. P. A. Persson probably would not agree that Altitude Points should be eliminated. He won the Swedish Soaring Championships by soaring 27,500 ft. above point of release in the updrafts of a thunderstorm. His Swedish built Weihe was special coated to prevent icing before the flight. Static electricity was so bad at 30,000 ft. that it was nearly impossible to hold the control stick and he was forced to leave the thunder cloud when the plane was still climbing at 33-50 ft. per sec.