



Fred Hoinville "Aussie" soaring ace.

Has the S.S.A. realized the full and future meaning of the present trend to limit the field at World Contests to as few as two pilots per nation?

The number of nations competing is growing every year. In 1952 it was up to 18. This year it appears to be 20. What will it be in 1956?

We must all concede that no nation can accept an unlimited number of entries; that simply means that we must analyze the problems and solve them in a manner that will be both fair and practical.

The problems are many. It is not simply a matter of unwieldy numbers, although that is the obvious and basic point. Other difficulties include such matters as whether a backward gliding country should be allowed the same number of entries as a very advanced country; the standard of skill and experience to be required of all entrants; whether the one-seater and two-seater contests should be run off together or separated; how to reduce the confusion and delays caused by very-long-distance retrieves on straight distance contests; how to reduce the cost to each entrant, which is now prohibitive to pilots who live thousands of miles away; how to make it possible to accept more entries without overburdening the host country; how to give reasonable equality of opportunity to all entrants.

The BGA (FAI approved) decision to accept only 40 entries in 1954 was forced by necessity. There are very few countries which could handle more efficiently; despite certain advantages, Spain could barely handle 56. So at first sight, it seems likely that the number will not be increased except on exceptional occasions. Let us see how the other factors may modify this view.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

by FRED HOINVILLE

To begin with, we could make the present number of entries more effective by eliminating the Bunnies, the inexperienced novices who gambol happily all over the countryside, getting experience at the expense of Diamond C grade pilots from other countries who are crowded out. To do this, we have our choice of two methods. Either we should proportion the number of entries for each country to the standard of gliding in that country, or demand a much higher personal standard from each entry. The Silver C was a test of high merit when it was devised, but with today's advances in soaring knowledge and sailplane efficiency, it has become meaningless. Any novice can sit 5 hours on a slope, and on a good day, a single thermal can give distance and height requirements. Surely it is worse than farcical that a one-flight novice from Nigeria, with not even the intention of contending seriously, can displace the third-best pilot of U. S. A. or France or Britain?

Perhaps we could demand an absolute minimum of one 150 mile flight or two 100 mile flights or their metric approximations. Certainly we should insist that every entrant is a serious and worthy contender.

Could we handle more entries by separating the two-seater event and holding it in the alternate year between Solo World Championships? This would also raise the prestige of this event by allowing the world's top pilots to enter both events instead of choosing between them — which almost inevitably means choosing the solo contest.

The delays and confusions of very long retrieves can be almost entirely eliminated by following the sensible lead of the German gliding authorities, who have devised contests based entirely on circuit flying, so that most gliders land back at home base each day, and the others are never more than a few miles away, usually less than 30 miles. This also gives pilots more rest and prevents the overwhelming fatigue which handicaps so many pilots under the present system, while leaving others quite fresh.

This system also quite obviously reduces all contest expenses to a fraction of present costs. Circuit flights can include such tests as Goal and Return, Triangular Speed Test, Distance around a closed course. If a straight distance flight is wanted, it can be last on the program.

Travel costs for overseas entrants can only be reduced by letting them fly local gliders, instead of bringing their own. This can only be done if suitable gliders are numerous and cheap. Equal opportunity depends on limitation of gliders to a fixed class category, more than anything else. If that category is small and cheap, they should soon be numerous enough to be supplied to overseas entrants too. The smaller they are, the more of them can be handled and so the more entries can be permitted.

The Schweizer L-26 and the Fauvel are excellent examples of one-class gliders which may soon help to solve this problem by the numbers of each which may soon be built in most countries.

For a start, we would do very well to ask the FAI to recognize a competition class based on these two machines, and seek to have them used for future contests, with others of similar size.

Later, I hope to see an even smaller class built and recognized, for I believe that, in addition to "building up" our best gliders to the ultimate in performance, we should also "build down" to the ultimate in cheapness and handiness. Only thus can we be always ahead of our problems.

Did You Know That...

One out of every 50 Australian Glider pilots has a Gold C?

One out of every 10 has a Silver C?

The Australian Distance Record is 260 miles?

The Height Record stands at 24,000 feet?

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Editor, ALLAN ASH,

3, Bowden Street, North Parramatta, New South Wales, Australia