

SOME COMPARISONS

The '56 World's Soaring Championships— With the '56 U. S. National

by E. J. REEVES

Tournament soaring in this country has for some years now, come to follow to some extent, the patterns and practices of the World Championships. Having done so, more particularly with regards to contest rules and scoring formulas, it is thought that our National tourneys have been made more equitable and enjoyable.

Looking as we do to the World's as something of a pace setter, there would seem to be no harm in our observing some of the comparisons between the two. This, albeit a known fact that such comparisons have probably no real value. But, these pages have to be filled with something.

To be kept in mind, of course, is the further fact that the creator of such things, determines first that 'his side' will show to advantage. Otherwise he would wholly disdain all such monkey business. The creator of these lines is no exception to the rule.

It should seem safe to assume that the cream of the crop of the world's soaring pilots with the very best machines participated in the World Champs, whereas in our U. S. Nationals our pilot entries ran all the way from rank novices, fifteen and seventeen-year-old lads, fellows in their first contest, to some pretty good pilots who were not quite up to world championship caliber.

The machine entries in our National ran from the War II 'klunkers' to some of our newer and sleeker designs.

This all being so—and only I say it is—it would be only natural to assume that performances of the pilots and machines in the World's would greatly exceed anything that might be reasonably expected in our National. Now let's see how it worked out.

The World's had 58 sailplanes from 25 countries. We had 46 ships from 25 of our states and four foreign countries. As is always the case in our Nationals, perhaps 10 or more of the ships came along for the ride or in

search of fun or the various 'C' badges. Certainly no more than about 35 of our ships could be said to be contesting as such.

We flew the full 9 days scheduled with no 'no contest' days. All of the seven tasks assigned, save one, were accomplished—and by quite a good number of the contestants.

The '56 World's saw 8 days of contest flying tried, one of those falling short of the minimums and being declared a 'no contest' day—for a net of 7 days. Two of their assigned tasks had no completions; these being short goals of 59 and 64 miles.

Three 'open' or 'free distance' days were flown in the World's. Best distances on those days were 268, 251 and 152 miles. A relatively few of their pilots exceeded 200 miles.

Two 'open' or 'free distance' days were flown in the U.S. National for max mileages of 393.5 and 338. But on one of these days alone 15 pilots exceeded 300 miles, and 200-mile flights were common.

In the World's they spent three days running to goals—59, 62, and 188 miles distance and we assume downwind. They had only seven completions to the 62-mile goal for a best speed of 45.9 MPH; no completions to the 59-mile goal. The rather fair 188-mile goal saw only seven arrivals with best speed of 40.7 MPH.

Our National did no goal runs, it being our opinion that goal-and-return flights and circuits present a bit more of a challenge. But for the sake of comparison in this 'study' we might stack our g-&-r flights up against their goal runs.

While seven contestants in the World's were going 62 miles to a goal at best speed of 45.9 MPH, thirty-five of our men were completing a 125-mile round trip with best speed of 51.7 MPH, and this with a very nasty cross-wind. While none of the World's pilots could attain the 59-mile goal we



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had thirty-one men completing a 160-mile g-&-r flight at best speed of 44.2 MPH.

Seven pilots in the World's Champs attained the 188-mile goal for best speed of 40.7 MPH. In our National we had 19 pilots going 217 miles g-&-r with best speed of 50.5 MPH.

The 100 KM speed course was done in both contests. The World's saw only eight pilots complete it with best speed of only 27.34 MPH. Exactly two dozen of our pilots did this 100 KM circuit at best speed of 50 MPH.

Neither the 200 or 300 KM tri-course was attempted in the World's competition.

We shot at the big 300 KM course on two occasions. Failing any completions the first time we managed to see nine come around the second try for best speed of 40.1 MPH.

In the altitude department, the World's bested our National rather soundly. They seemed to enjoy a vast amount of cloud and wave soaring with heights of fifteen and twenty thousand feet being quite common. Just how those pilots failed to convert these prodigious heights to either speed or distance to better advantage is not quite clear to this 'comparer.' Very few of our contestants in the National reported altitudes of even 15,000, also no great amount of cloud flying was done for the very simple reason that none were available on most of the days.

From the standpoint of organization and operations, the World Champs under the direction of the efficient and widely experienced National Aero Club of France, certainly excelled anything even dreamed of by

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