

# MORE COMPARISONS

A comparison of the sailplanes seen at the Internationals  
with those at our Nationals, 1956

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While showing pictures at the Snow Bird meet of the planes seen at the Internationals, some unusual questions were asked. Whether this was from a lack of information about the Internationals (detailed reports in *Sailplane and Gliding*, *Flight*, *Swiss Aero Revue*, *Aviasport*, unfortunately not available to the average reader of *SOARING*) or an effort to bait me was not ascertained. Since the impression was given by Reeves in his article, "Some Comparisons," that the Texas Nationals far outshone the Internationals, possibly this should be corrected. Let's state that Texas had excellent weather for this year's Nationals. Judging from the letters published in several places, the sponsors did a good job and everyone had a "hot" time. I personally commend them for their original "extra" editions of *Spirals*—a unique and excellent idea. But why spoil it with a silly comparison? While "E. J." had his tongue in his cheek when he wrote that comparison, many members of the S.S.A. don't recognize Texas propaganda when they see it. It was felt necessary to answer with this article for the sake of our friends in foreign countries where soaring represents a tremendous interest compared to our puny efforts.

The Internationals in soaring are comparable to the Olympics in other sports. Having officiated in N.C.A.A. swimming championships where world's records are occasionally broken, I would never think to compare these meets with the Olympics. The competition in the Olympics is so great that a world record might be established in every event except for the "tension." Every competitor is out to win and doesn't care about records. Now for soaring.

Let's see how you would rate the Texas Nationals when a few of the facts are listed. There were 30 eligible single place planes in this year's Nationals. Eleven were flown by pilots still seeking their Silver "C" rating.

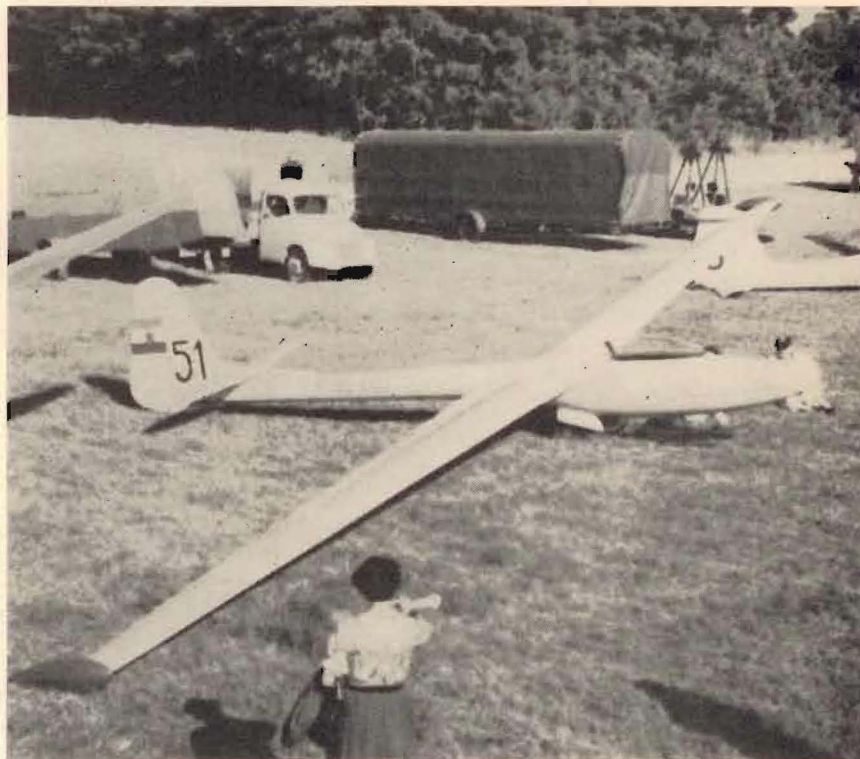


Photo: MacCready, Sr.

*The Yugoslav Meteor was probably the highest performance sailplane at the 1956 International Soaring Contest. It has a reported glide ratio of 42:1 at 56 mph.*

Among the full list of 38 single place planes there were two with laminar flow wings which seems to be the general trend in high performance sailplane design at present. The recent Nationals were blessed with good weather and fairly strong conditions, even by Texas standards. But these conditions required only straight cross country flying as hard as one could go. Apparently not even cloud flying was required, and navigation in these vast open spaces was no problem. Can you imagine what would have happened to most of these pilots if they found themselves at a great height, in a big over-cast over terrific mountains (see Wills' account). Let's rate the meet as on a level with an N.C.A.A. Swimming meet, in comparison with the Olympics.

On the other hand, in the Internationals there were 45 single place planes, twenty-two of which were laminar flow wings, flaps, retractable wheels, etc. The cost of some was astronomical. All 45 single place planes were piloted by champions or near champions from 25 different countries. The weather conditions were extremely varied from tremendous turbulence to very, very weak. Every type of piloting was required of the pilots—cloud flying in thunderstorms, ridge soaring along sheer cliffs 4,000

to 6,000 feet high with their tops in the overcast, wave flying of every type, along with the cross-country type of flying seen in Texas. In two events all types of flying occurred at different stages. There is but one prize in these contests, namely first place—the World Championship. Curiously enough, only an individual can win that place. His country is never officially mentioned. Do you still think the Texas Nationals were on a par competitively with the Internationals?

Competitions in soaring cannot be compared except in very general terms. However, it is possible to compare the last four Internationals in one respect, namely in what will be called "boobos," for want of a better term. These are mistakes and misinterpretations of rules by officials, not