

COMPETITION RULES

Practically anyone who has flown a glider, or flown in one, feels that the job of developing a set of rules whereby we can fairly test the skill of one pilot against another is fundamentally simple and straightforward. Arguing against this is the fact that when new persons or groups approach this task for the first time, an astonishing divergence of opinion is apparent, and when applied to the complex and highly variable realities of a competition, even the most carefully contrived and tested rules often exhibited serious shortcomings.

The SSA Contest Board has been charged with the responsibility for establishing a body of rules which will assure fair competition for the title of National Soaring Champion, and monitoring the rules of regional and local competitions so that the same standards will apply where this is practical or applicable to the purpose of the competition.

During the last five years the Board, in collaboration with contest organizers and many experienced competition pilots, has done a great deal of work toward evolving stable and generally acceptable standards of competition.

Some of the rule-making objectives have been:

1. To assure a fair test of the judgement and piloting ability required to achieve maximum performance in various competition tasks.
2. To minimize hazard.
3. To minimize the effects of varying weather conditions and choice of task on the outcome; a relatively short flight on a poor day may require as much skill and judgement as a quite long flight on a very good day.
4. To give speed performance proper recognition on the task days (this has been an especially difficult job — no very simple formula has yet been offered).
5. To keep the scoring simple, both for scorekeepers and for evaluation of contest standings by competitors — this is one of the chief reasons for scoring all contest days rather than allowing one to drop his worst day's score.
6. To conform insofar as possible with the rules governing International Competition.
7. To permit opportunities to earn FAI badges during the course of competition.

A good deal of work remains to be done before we can consider the competitive aspects of our sport to be stabilized with respect to tasks, procedures and scoring. Partly, this is due to a rapidly changing emphasis upon what elements should be involved in a competition. This change has been accelerated by the rapid advances in equipment performance and soaring technique made within the past fifteen years. The earlier emphasis upon duration and altitude has been almost completely supplanted, first by distance flights and then by task flying which emphasizes speed and navigation ability and at the same time minimizes the hazard and fatigue of long retrieves.

We may one day have at hand a set of rules which are as fixed as those which govern sailing and other long-established competitive sports. Your Contest Board will welcome additional critical evaluation and comment on the rules we are now using in order to hasten this day.

— W. S. IVANS, JR.