

SOUTHWESTERN AND TEXAS SOARING CHAMPIONSHIPS

by TERRY WHITE

Serious contenders and airport flyers totaled 12 sailplanes in the Southwestern and Texas Soaring Championships at Grand Prairie September 5, 6 and 7.

It was blowing a young gale from the south as pilots prepared to launch into the task set for the first day: a 100-mile triangle from Grand Prairie to Weatherford to the Wiberg "Flying W Ranch," and return to Grand Prairie. The first two legs were with approximately 90-degree crosswinds of 20-30 mph, and a tail wind on the last, short 6-mile leg from the Flying W.

First brave souls off were Ned and Bill Snead of the Central Texas Glider Council in their flat-top TG-2. Then the others, who were reluctant to be first, began launching in quick succession.

Flight tracks appeared rather saw-toothed as the sailplanes tacked to and fro like sailboats, working the small choppy thermals, drifting northward all the while.

Dick Johnson's determination and just plain "playing it cool" with the low-sink Weihe earned for him the only completion of the day's task, with an average speed of 21.8 mph.

Bob Brown in the Brown-Prue 'Rebel' (known in vulgar circles as the Pruney-Mae) landed at the first turn point; George Coder in his ivory-colored Ka-6BR, and the Brothers Snead landed just short of

the turn point; Chuck Lewis, flying Gordon DeJarlais' 1-26 drifted beyond and far to the north of the first turn point and suffered under the radius-to-course-line rule. Marion Griffith and Howard Grove, dual in their L-K, earned 204 points with a landing short of the first turn point, and Pat Sherman, L-K, picked up 60 points.

Others attempting the task either failed to get away or did not exceed the 20-mile minimum to begin earning mileage or speed points.

Task for the middle day was a circuit from Grand Prairie to Russell Field, Fort Worth, and return as many times as possible on a cumulative mileage basis. One round trip: 36.4 miles. Weather: Still stinko; choppy, weak thermals, strong winds.

Brown nailed down the 1000 points for the day with 3-3/4 trips, or 135.7 miles. A scant four miles behind him was Johnson with 131.3 miles for 962 points.

In third place for the day was Lewis with one and one-half circuits, or 54.3 miles for 297 points. Monty Montgomery, 1-23, took fourth place with one circuit, 36.4 miles, 140 points.

The third day still had a strong south wind, but the thermals were stronger, cloud base higher, and a promised higher percentage of completions. Task: Goal-and-return upwind to Cleburne, 67.4 miles around.

Brown landed 15 miles out at

Mansfield, (Texas, not Jayne) and after a hasty retrieve by wife Marianne, was off again on the second try.

First pilot to complete the course was Coder with an average speed of 28.8 mph. Johnson arrived shortly thereafter with a speed of 30.8 mph. Coder landed and launched again to better his speed; he averaged 32.8 mph on the second trip and sacked up the 1000 points for the day. Johnson, who had not landed from his circuit, paced Coder for the second trip just for kicks. Although Johnson's second trip did not count for scoring, (no landing at completion of first trip) he averaged 31.5 mph.

Meanwhile, back at the task, Brown went down at the turn point on his second attempt at the course for 208 points. Others completing the task were the Brothers Snead, Chuck Lewis, the Griffith-Grove duo, and Montgomery — a total of seven completions.

When the last score was tallied by the slip-rule boys, Johnson was in first place with 2914 points to win both the Southwestern and Texas Championships.

Brown placed second, 1499 points, Lewis third, 1267 points and Coder fourth, 1255 points.

At an awards presentation on the night of the 7th, Johnson received the newly-established perpetual TSA Founders Trophy for the Southwestern Champion, and the Stratoflex Texas Champion Trophy. The Founders Trophy replaces the retired Silvaire Trophy.

Individual trophies for second and third places went to Brown and Lewis.

Rebel with a cause, Bob Brown waits for the next tow while his wifely crewchief Mory Ann provides a last-minute swig of something cold. Brown earned the 1000 points on the second day and placed second in the overall scoring.

Photo: Terry White



Chuck Lewis' steady average each day gave him third place in the final scoring. He flew the snowwhite 1-26 belonging to Gordon DeJarlais. The Southwestern was Lewis' first taste of competition soaring.

Photo: Terry White

