

FIRST GREAT PLAINS SOARING CONTEST

Sanctioned by The Soaring Society of America, Inc.

By DAVID E. GRAY

It was a surprise to no one when Dick Johnson won the contest and became the first Great Plains Soaring Champion. The meet was held at the Harvey Young Airport, Tulsa, Okla., during the first four days in July. Although only six sailplanes were entered, a four state area was represented, Kansas by Jim LeSueur from Wichita flying an L-K; Oklahoma by Tiner Lapsley from Stillwater, also flying an L-K; and by Winfield Evans, Tom Milam and Rodney Smith from Oklahoma City, sharing their club TG-3A; Missouri by Fred Friedewald and Joe Burke from St. Louis, flying a 1-26; and by Jack Bates from Kansas City, also flying a 1-26; and Texas was adequately represented by Dick Johnson from Richardson, flying his recently modified Adastra.

The contest was well organized and executed. Two towplanes were on hand and each pilot was launched at his chosen take-off time throughout the contest. Ground control was maintained from a 15 ft. platform equipped with light gun, Citizen's Band transceiver and field telephone. To present weather information and aid both the contestants and officials in task planning, world aeronautical charts covering a radius of 300 miles were glued to beaverboard and covered with plastic for marking with grease pencil. A combination score and launch status board was kept current to aid the ground controller and anyone interested in how the meet was progressing. Even the weather organized itself enough to allow official contest days throughout the meet.

First Day

A mild and slow moving cold front crossed Tulsa during the meet to influence the soaring and assigned tasks. On the first day, this front was in the extreme western Oklahoma panhandle extending into mid-Kansas then turning northward to divide Nebraska. The wind was southerly at 18-20 knots at all soaring altitudes. The Showalter stability index decreased slightly from +2 at Oklahoma City to +1 downwind at Kansas City. An open distance task was declared and first take-off was at 1215. Dick Johnson outclassed

the group by traveling 152 miles to Garnett, Kansas. The 1-26's were second and third. Jack Bates traveling 65 miles followed by a 27.5 mile flight by Joe Burke. Neither L-K left the field and thus were outclassed by the TG-3A which flew 14 miles with Rod Smith at the controls.

Second Day

The mild front finally passed Tulsa on the second day. In an effort to soar before it reached the field, a 105 mile triangular task was declared. The overcast from the incoming front squelched all soaring before anyone could get away.

The wind promptly shifted to the NNE at 12 knots and it looked as if everyone would be grounded for the rest of the day. At about 2 p.m., a break became evident in the overcast to the south and ground-formed cumulus appeared. The task was quickly changed to an out and return south across the Arkansas River to Okmulgee airport, a total distance of 69 miles. About an hour and a half later, all six ships were in the air and on their way. Tiner Lapsley, flying his L-K, was the only pilot to travel as far as the turning point. The remaining ships managed to cross the river and land in the same vicinity about halfway to Okmulgee. Dick Johnson was second with a distance of 20.5 miles, and Jim LeSueur third in his L-K with a flight of 20.0 miles. Winfield Evans was fourth in the TG-3A with 19.5 miles. The end of the second day left Johnson, Lapsley, Bates and Evans/Smith in the first four places with 1595, 1000, 792, and 657 points respectively.

Third Day

A completely new air mass confronted everyone on the third day with a stiff easterly breeze and a stability index of +4 at Oklahoma City. The index decreased slightly to +2 at Amarillo, indicating better conditions to the west. Another open distance day was declared, and Dick Johnson promptly demonstrated his ability by flying 147.5 miles. No one appeared to have difficulty in leaving the field despite a temperature inversion at 4500 feet and a cloudless sky. Jim LeSueur worked hard for an 87.5 mile flight to put him in second place. The two 1-26's appeared

to pace each other by flying 32 and 30 miles, respectively. At the end of the third day, it became obvious that any combination of circumstances would not keep Dick Johnson from winning the championship. Dick had a total of 2595 points compared to 1173 points earned by Jim LeSueur and 1163 points accumulated by Tiner Lapsley. Jack Bates was in fourth place with 995 points.

Fourth Day

Unfortunately, Tiner Lapsley was forced to withdraw from competition because of a death in his family. This left a spread of 178 points between the top contenders for second place at the beginning of the last day. The task was a predictable out and return flight SSE to an airport at Wagoner for a total of 60 miles. The local stability index was +6 with a south wind at 18 knots, a poor day for soaring. Dick Johnson, after a bit of difficulty in leaving the field, returned in an elapsed time of 2 hours and 32 minutes. Jim LeSueur in the L-K managed to fly the total course distance, but drifted to the north of Tulsa and did not return to the field. Jack Bates managed to fly 4 mi. for 3rd spot that day.

Summary

The meet was somewhat disappointing only because of the unexpectedly few number of contestants. Other than that, it was an unqualified success. The entire membership of the Skyhawks worked hard and diligently to conduct the meet, and many friends volunteered with their help. As in all contests, everyone enjoyed the social gatherings and went home benefitting from new experiences and the inner satisfaction known only to sailplane pilots.

Final Standings

Johnson (Adastra)	3595
LeSueur (L-K)	1923
Lapsley (L-K)	1163
Bates (1-26)	1064
Burke/Friedewald (1-26)	827
Evans/Smith/Milam (TG-3A) ..	694

71-HR. FLIGHT IN HAWAII

On July 29, 1961, a 71-hour, 5-minute soaring flight was completed in Hawaii by Geza Vass and Guy B. Davis. They flew a two-place Pratt-Read sailplane in trade wind ridge lift over Oahu. The longest previous soaring flight was 57:10 hrs. by two Frenchmen in 1954 but, shortly thereafter, the F.A.I. ceased to recognize soaring endurance records so the Hawaiian flight is mostly noteworthy for the publicity it received.