

THE MODERN SAILPLANES

Part III

by George B. Moffat, Jr.



Photo by S. A. Aldott

Standard Austria

Like the Foka, the Austria shows the very best in wooden construction with extensive care taken to protect the plywood from wave inducing moisture. All the Austria's I have seen have been of outstanding workmanship and finish. One can easily see why the OSTIV judges picked it as the best Standard class ship at the 1960 internationals.

The performance figures on the Austria show that a fairly high minimum sink (.7 m/sec as compared to .62 for the Ka-6, .66 for the Foka) has been accepted to gain a very flat glide at higher speeds. Best L/D of 34 occurs at 65 mph with about 30 at 80 mph and 23 at 100 mph. While these figures seem to me a little optimistic, the Austria obviously comes near to them. Up to 80 mph it stays close to the HP-8, dropping away gradually up to 100 mph. In thermaling it is less impressive. It flies very fast and seems unable to climb significantly better than the HP-8. The 1964 model will have a thicker wing in an attempt to improve the low speed characteristics.

In handling, I found the Austria somewhat disappointing. Perhaps because I just got out of the superb Foka. The controls seemed rather imprecise with a noticeably slow rate of roll (just under five seconds) for a standard class ship. It seems to want to be thermaled rather fast, around 53 mph, but the

speed proved difficult to control in banks of over 35 degrees. Stability in yaw was average for a V-tail, the string having a tendency to wander during map reading and other cockpit chores. None of these matters would disturb a good pilot after a few hours of practice, of course. In straight flight the excellence of the ship showed itself at once, we easily passed all the other sailplanes that happened to be around. The dive brakes, like those on the Foka, are large and effective, a point I appreciated as I spent most of my approach explaining to Elmira tower why I forgot to look at the sailplane's registration number before taking off. "That cream colored glider" was finally cleared to land and did so only to discover that the brake barely worked. Landing brings up the greatest single problem, due to the ridiculously flat fuselage bottom with only three or four inches of ground clearance. Any rough field would likely cause problems—and expensive ones, at that. One Canadian owner has worked out an extendable wheel to cope with the difficulty. Builder Martin Schempp tells me that this year's model will have an optional retractable wheel.

Rigging of the Austria seems to depend on the ship. Most go together very quickly, the automatic control hook-up is a wonderful feature. Certain ships seem to have trouble in aligning the aft wing pin, most do not. In general rigging is probably easier than in any other ship I know of.

Cockpit comfort depends entirely on the parachute worn. With a conventional chute I can't get into an Austria at all, but Ben Greene, who is as tall as I, uses a chest type pack which lives in a special niche behind the pilot's shoulders. With this I found the cockpit extremely comfortable, the seating is semi-reclined similar to the Skylark 4s. Since one sits almost on the bottom of the ship, crack-up protection would be poor compared to other sailplanes we have described. The nose, back to the wing, is of fiberglass and very strong. Visibility is similar to that of a Ka-6; good, but not picture window like. Controls and instruments are well placed; the panel offers plenty of room for the gauges.

The Austria costs about \$4,600 delivered in New York. For this you get a superb medium and strong weather sailplane capable of such flights as Ben Greene's two 450 milers in Texas last summer. While the handling is definitely below the Foka's, so is the price. Further, the Austria has a standard ATC in this country. The new 1964 model with an improved wing and retractable gear should be watched with interest.

Olympia 463

At Lasham in England I had the opportunity through the kindness of owner Mrs. Anita Schmidt to fly the Olympia 463, the British Standard class sailplane. Like the Ka-6 it is of the classic wooden construction and with the decidedly boxy appearance tends to make one rather skeptical of performance after seeing such super standards as the Foka and Austria. However, as Herr Huth of Germany points out so graphically with his Ka-6 at each Internationals, super looks do not necessarily win super prizes.

On leaving the winch tow at 1,100 feet I found only strong sink and was just thinking about entering the pattern when I got a bit of nibble. The 463 flew slowly around her own wing tip in beautifully coordinated turns, milking this decidedly English type thermal for all it was worth. After reaching 2,000 feet, I decided we had enough altitude so I could start flying. It's that kind of ship. Just show it a thermal and don't get in the way. Subsequent efforts indicated that best climb occurred between 45 and 48 mph at which speeds