

16th WRIGHT MEMORIAL GLIDER MEET

*Sanctioned by The Soaring Society of America, Inc.
Sponsored by The Soaring Society of Dayton*

by ROBERT J. BUCHWALDER Contest Director

With the arrival of the contestants and a cold front at Richmond, Ind., site of the 16th Wright Memorial Glider Meet, on Wednesday May 27th the day before the start of the three day competition, contest officials were confident of a fine opening day. But on Thursday morning we awakened to a dull gray sky and very cold air. As the result of the poor outlook, the pilots meeting was delayed until 1:00 P.M.

Jerry Crocker, our Met. man, gave a quick report on what had happened to the "fine first day" and based on his briefing, the Task Committee decided to declare a No Contest Day.

By early evening the long awaited blue sky appeared overhead and everyone looked forward to a good day on Friday.

Thursday was rounded out with a chicken barbecue and a weather presentation by two Dayton FAA Flight Service people. The festivities went over so well that it should become a regular part of the Contest.

During the night, the cold air mass moved further south, clearing the sky. Lift developed early, with zero-sink maintained in the Club 2-22, 9:00 A.M. at 1,500 feet above the Field. Cumulus were forecast with 3,000 feet bases; however, as the day developed, cu were seen only to the south, east, and west. The wind for most of the day was about 10-15 kts from the northwest.

The pilots' meeting was held at 9:30 A.M. and the day's task was announced. The flight was to be to the north; a goal and return to Steed Airport, Portland, Ind.; a total distance of 97 miles. After the weather briefing and general business was dispensed with, take-off times were selected.

Julian Allen and Marv Frost, the Turn Point Crew, flew to the point with the Club's new Aeronca. Jim Hurst, Chief of Field Operations, rounded up the pilots and ships with the aid of the loud hailer mounted atop the tow car. Official contest starts began at 12:11 P.M. with Ralph Turner in the BG-12A

taking off behind Gil Fuller's Piper. Test flights had been made earlier by Schreder, Mozer, Smith and Coverdale to check their equipment. In fact, Bill Coverdale had just finished his HP-11 a few days before and was flying it for the second time. Schreder was giving Bill some aid on 123.3, relative to flap settings at various flying speeds, and this was rather interesting chatter to those on the ground.

Contest launchings proceeded very smoothly and ran ahead of schedule. Some of the last pilots to make a start were Mozer, Smith, and Schreder, in that order, between 1:20 and 1:35 P.M.

First back was A. J. Smith, in the Sisu, at 3:47 P.M. with a 2:22 elapsed time. Then Doc Mullen in the Prue Std. followed by Rudy Mozer, Dale May and Bob Kellner, in that order. By 6:00 P.M. eight had made it back and all were accounted for except Bill Sparks in the 1-23. We tried a call on radio and sure enough, Bill was still in the air; said he was about eight miles out and taking a few more turns in the thermal to make sure he would make it back. When spotted with field glasses and told he had it made, Bill retorted that he was "just a novice and wanted to be sure." He landed at 6:11 P.M.

Nine out of 20 made it back, with A. J. Smith in the Sisu at 41 mph earning 1,000 points and Sparks the slowest at 16.6 mph, 692 points. Less than 100 points separated the second from the eighth. Everybody who made it back stated they had at least one real low spot during the circuit. Phil Paul, flying his Ka-8, told of circling at about 600 ft., and then having Joe Bearden, in the 1-23, slide in under him, make a few turns and land.

During the night, the wind shifted around to the east, as the high pressure center moved out of the area. By early Saturday morning, a layer of broken cirrus had moved overhead, and its leading edge formed a line running west to east over the Richmond Airport. A plot

aloft showed that temperatures were warmer than the day before at altitudes greater than 3,000 feet above the ground. By the time the first starts were made, about noon, this edge had moved 15 to 20 miles to the north, holes in the cirrus closed up, and conditions for lift became poorer. Surface winds were easterly at about 12 kts to 2,000 feet and above that switched back 45° to become direct headwinds for the outbound leg of the chosen task.

At the 9:30 A.M. pilots' meeting, the task was announced. A goal and return to Treaty City Airport, Greenville, Ohio; a total of 56 miles. Though a relatively short task, it turned out to be a good choice in view of the deteriorating weather conditions, and the fact that all data had to be in by 4:00.

Dick Shreder chose the earliest take-off time and was in the air at 11:59 A.M., followed closely by Mozer, Rogers, Page, and Mullen. Apparently Dick intended to make a leisurely trip around the course, and then do it the second time and really bomb around to make up the 250 some points between him and Smith. However, about an hour later we received word that Dick had landed just short of the turn point.

By the time all sailplanes were launched, Rudy Mozer was back in his Ka-6, followed quickly by Smith and Mullen. The weather continued to deteriorate, and it became questionable whether enough contestants would go 35 miles to make it an official contest day.

One by one they made it back, though; May in the Fauvette, Hauke in the Ka-6, and Page in the 1-26. Then, 50 seconds before the gate closed, Phillips returned, flying the L-Spatz. A call on the radio produced Bill Sparks a few miles out, a bit too far to make it on time. He crossed the finish line at 4:03:30 for distance points. Smith made the fastest flight for 1,000 points, by duplicating his previous day's performance of completing the circuit at an average speed of 41 mph. Eight pilots made it back.

After a hectic late afternoon, putting away equipment, calculating points, selling banquet tickets, refunding tow tickets, washing up and changing clothes just in time to make the banquet, everybody sighed with relief that it was almost over.