

RENO RETROSPECTIVE

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As the distance capability of the modern sailplane has increased the importance of the free-distance task has tended to diminish. The question as to whether such a task is any longer suitable at all in national competition, which is reviewed in the accompanying article, will be examined by the Board of Directors when it meets in La Jolla in January to review the rules for the 1967 National Soaring Championships. Recommendations concerning these rules, particularly as regards the free-distance task, should be submitted to Richard E. Schreder, Chairman of the Rules Committee, in time to permit him to draft recommendations prior to the meeting of the board.

Now that the dust has had some time to settle back at Stead Air Force Base and the contestants have all juggled the scores to see what would have happened *if only*, perhaps we should take a look back to see what can be learned about ships, tasks and rules from this longest, tallest, biggest-ever Nationals.



Photo by George Ureges

Suzanne and George Moffat enjoy the spoils of victory.

First, of course, the ships. Although nothing could be more dangerous and potentially misleading, all of us have a strong tendency to try to judge sailplane performance from Nationals' placing. About the only safe comment would be that only the good ones got anywhere near the top. Beyond that point we move into conjecture. Dick Schreder's new HP-14, finished at the very last moment and still very far from being in contest trim, won by the greatest margin in years. Judging from comparative performance against the Sibus and Austrias, Dick has come up with a real winner. In level flight the HP-14 always seemed a bit better than the Austrias and at least as good as the best of the Sibus—up to 80 m.p.h. In climb it seemed equal to the SH-1 and better than the Sisu in weak thermals.

Another very potent newcomer was the Libelle, placing third and sixth despite the fact that the pilots had little time in their ships. The Libelles were able to glide even with anything on the straight—Graham Thomson and Carroll Klein having a five-m.p.h. advantage on the SH-1 at any speed—and be able to climb at least even with the K-6CR in weak thermals despite a wing loading of over six lbs. Undoubtedly a lot of pilots are going to do very well in these beautifully built little ships, although the miniscule dive brakes—about as effective as those of a 2-22A—and the resultant very flat approach and long landing roll are going to make a lot of Eastern pilots opt for the model with a tail parachute. In a test landing over trees, using full slip, the Libelle took over twice the landing distance of an Austria and three times that of a Sisu, all flown by the same pilot.

The Austria SH-1 also had an excellent showing, coming second and seventh in the very strong Reno conditions. The best of the long-wing SHK's came 11 and 13, their extra ability in weak-thermal climbing proving less of an advantage than the ability to drive fast in very turbulent air. The top K-6E, flown by Wally Scott, was only able to finish 16th. Rudy Mozer, flying a sister ship, had to drop out for health reasons after the fourth day having placed 19, 21, and 35th for the days flown. Dave Johnson did the best of the K-6CR pilots with a 25th. Obviously the strong thermals and enormous distances between them were not to the taste of this fine light-and-medium-weather ship that did so well at Adrian.

The newest model Dart, the 17R, did well at Reno with a ninth and 24th. Both these ships seemed to have good penetration—near that of the Austrias up to 80 m.p.h.—combined with the traditional Slingsby climbing ability and handling. These ships will undoubtedly prove very potent in the weaker thermals of the East.

The many Sibus entered showed the continued ability of this design, particularly in strong weather, with a 4, 8, 12, and 14 showing. A. J. Smith's ship especially, much lightened over the other models, seemed to climb fully as well as the SH-1's even in one very weak thermal where A.J. and I chased each other's tails for three-quarters of an hour at one point. This particular Sisu seemed fully up to the Libelles at both ends of the performance scale. Heavier Sibus looked very good in strong weather, but tended to suffer when the lift fell below 200 f.p.m. which it did so often during the last two or three hours of the day.

Before discussing the tasks and possible improvements or lessons to be learned, we should say a word or two about the weather at Reno. As the speeds and