

distances indicate, lift varied from strong to stronger. Everyone grew used to seeing 1000 f.p.m. on the clock and most of us found quite a bit more on many occasions. Wave was a factor for at least some of the pilots and was often the deciding factor. Unlike the thermal lift the wave was seldom strong and often very weak, sometimes 150 f.p.m. or less (although it went as high as 30,000 ft.). As a result the pilots who went very high and flew all the way around a triangle in wave were often beaten by 10-15 m.p.h. by pilots who stayed low and played the thermals, for example Bikle and Schreder on the last day. Most of the thermals were dry and spaced very far apart, tending to increase the luck factor somewhat over cumulus conditions. An added feature was the ability to get away as early as 10:30 in the morning and fly very late in the evening. On most of the distance tasks the leaders landed because of darkness rather than lack of lift. The result of this meteorological largesse was that the winners generally flew for ten hours on distance days and then faced long retrieves which frequently brought them back to Reno a couple of hours before dawn. And this despite the task committee's attempts to have distance tasks end somewhere near Stead.

These enormous distances flown turned out to prove very little. The accompanying table shows the placement of the first 10 contestants for both this year and last if only speed tasks were scored. In only one case in two years would the placings have changed by more than two positions. The often-heard myth that all speed tasks would give certain ships and pilots great advantages does not seem statistically supportable. While we are hardly trying to advocate that distance be abandoned completely as a measure for the Nationals, it should be obvious that this is the direction toward which we are moving, and rightly. The Germans, with their characteristic leadership in the soaring world, had only speed tasks in this year's Nationals, and the same old names were again at the top.

An idea which the Germans used this year could well be adapted to our distance tasks. For the longer tasks they used a twice-around triangle, the idea being that the pilot would in no case be more than fifty miles away from base even for a 300-mile course, thus cutting down retrieves and vastly reducing crew mileage. From a point in the center of the triangle crews would be in constant radio contact, with no driving at all. The gains in safety and the savings in money are obvious. It costs at least 10 cents a mile to drive a car and trailer; few drove less

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than 4000 miles at Reno. With the long days anticipated at Marfa, we can expect pilots to shell out like amounts for gas next year unless the rules are changed. Does contest flying have to become a rich man's sport?

A difficulty with the distance task which becomes increasingly apparent, and must obviously be solved if we are to have fair contests, is the penalty involved because of long take-off lines. The towing was handled very well in Reno, but 60 sailplanes still take about an hour to launch and no planned change seems likely to speed up the process significantly. The result is that on a typical day, with five to seven hours of flying, the chap with the luck of being able to choose an early time may have a 15 to 20% advantage over the contestant who gets stuck at the end of the list. Theoretically, slipping the choice for starting times corrects this situation: in practice it

U. S. Nationals for 1965 and 1966 Scored With Only Speed Tasks Counting

1965				1966			
PILOT	SAILPLANE	PLACING	SPEED PLACING	PILOT	SAILPLANE	PLACING	SPEED PLACING
H. W. Grosse	K-6E	1	3	R. Schreder	HP-14	1	1
D. Svec	Sisu	2	1	G. Moffat	SH-1	2	3
G. Moffat	SH-1	3	2	G. Thomson	Libelle	3	5
J. Firth*	SH-1	4	9	J. Ryan	Sisu	4	2
P. Bikle	Prue Std.	5	5	E. Makula	Foka	5	6
R. Mozer	K-6E	6	7	C. Klein	Libelle	6	4
G. Ray	K-6CR	7	6	R. Klemmedson	SH-1	7	7
B. Greene*	SH-1	8	10	D. Svec	Sisu	8	9
R. Schreder	HP-12	9	4	J. Brittingham	Dart 17R	9	8
W. Scott	K-6CR	10	8	S. Starr	1-23HM**	10	10

*Pilots who failed to finish one speed task, thus changing their standings by a more-than-normal degree.
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