

what if he had merely been too injured to move? Less dramatic but quite as real is highway safety.

Perhaps the one thing at Reno which got the most praise, and rightly, was the new starting gate set-up pioneered by Paul Bikle and the Southern California Competition Club that he heads. This device seemed capable of reading altitude to well within the accuracy limits of the average altimeter and offered pilots immediate verification of their starts. We hope that the same group may be able to come up with turn-point identification which can be read from only one position and from any altitude. The clock-type panels used this year, although excellent in theory, proved invisible from very high altitudes and had the added disadvantage of being readable at different distances depending on the placing of the marker panel. These differences often gave one competitor an advantage of several miles over another. The best suggestion which came up in discussion of the problem at Reno was the use of one, two or three strobe lights hidden by a circular canvas shield. Contestants would merely record the number of lights seen and give the time. This system would insure each competitor flying the same distance.

The last department that seems to offer significant room for improvement is towing. Chuck Glattley's fine organization at Reno certainly did everything possible under the existing rules, but the fact remains that a tow to 2000 ft. is a long process at mile-high sites like Reno and Marfa. All of us had our share of the hair-raising tows that resulted from tight thermaling by the towship, and most of us at times got into extremely dangerous situations wherein only the high penalty in contest points kept us from releasing. A great improvement will result if we abandon the rule which states that ships must be dropped at a fixed point at 2000 feet. Instead, require that all the tow ships follow the same flight path and that they go as soon as practicable to the side of the airport away from the course line for the day. Pilots may release at any point before being waved off at 2000 ft. Most pilots would naturally release in the first good thermal, freeing the towship sooner.

Most of the contestants at Reno would agree that Marshall Claybourn ran a magnificent contest with

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tasks that were as good as could possibly have been chosen within present requirements. Marshall himself commented after the contest that he was appalled at the territory over which he was forced to send the competitors. If we persist in clinging to the same rules as we have today, next year's contest will undoubtedly be much the same, with pilots averaging nine to 10 hours in the cockpit on distance days, with the 15% casualty rate of ships we had at Reno, with the long, expensive retrieves and pilots flying in crowded thermals the next day on three or four hours of sleep.

The time has come for the U.S. to reconsider the contest rules. The American soaring movement has come of age. We need not look to England and Europe for precedent in everything that we do, following along 10 years behind as we have done in the past. Specifically, we should abandon the expensive and outmoded free-distance task, relic of the days when most contestants were after their FAI badges. We should limit the required number of distance tasks to three and make them around a closed course, the furthest marker to be no more than 60 miles from takeoff (speed-task turnpoints might have the same rule), and we should modify the release-point rules to allow release at the pilot's discretion. The increases in both ship and pilot performance over the last 10 years make these changes mandatory if we are to have fair, meaningful contests.

1966 MIDWEST REGIONAL SOARING CONTEST

TOM PAGE

National champions set the pace for the 1966 Midwest Regional Soaring Contest and other recent Nationals contestants kept them working. A. J. Smith won the first half of the split contest at Richmond and Dean Svec won the second half at Champaign. Smith's consistently high daily points on all six days overcame Svec's four 1,000-point days to give Smith the top rank, 5,722 to 5,654.

The first SSA-sanctioned split Regional contest (at two sites and three months apart) brought over 30 competing sailplanes to each part of the contest, but only 10 of these could be said to have been flown by Regional competitors. Valuable experience was gained both by sponsors and by the nearly 50 pilots who were not shooting for Regional honors. This training function of Regional contests enriches future competition.

Results of the 18th Wright Memorial Glider Meet at Richmond have already been reported (*Soaring*, July 1966) so the 5th Illini Soaring Contest is reported here. However, scores for the top 14 pilots for the six Regional contest days are shown in the table.

The tower-controlled University of Illinois-Willard airport was wide open for soaring contestants over the Labor Day weekend. There was plenty of ramp space, little power traffic, and no radios required for sailplanes. Five University Cessna 172's or 175's were used by Illini club members for rapid launching. Prior agreements on traffic with the tower made sharing of the pattern simple but only a few contestants returned to the site.

Task selection by co-directors Tom Page, Wil Schuemann, and Bill Rogers kept performance requirements stiff. Wil provided the weather briefing,