

R/C Soaring Nationals



While motors whined at Glenview, silent soarers ascended over Miller Meadow.



Photos by John Harast

by Dennis Hall

The third Annual R/C Soaring Nationals, sponsored by the Silent Order of Aeromodeling by Radio (S.O.A.R.), with Dan Pruss as CD, was held at Miller Meadow on July 23-25. This year the contest was held as an AMA provisional category meet in conjunction with the AMA NATS, using the provisional rules submitted to the AMA by the League of Silent Flight. If the number of contestants entering this meet can be used as an indicator of the growth of R/C soaring interest in the U.S., then it is encouraging to note that in the 1970 meet thirty-five

contestants entered; in 1971 there were fifty-four, and in 1972 there were one hundred twenty-four! The biggest U.S. soaring contest yet!

The contest board consisted of Dan, Dave Burt, Neil Liptak and myself. Neil conducted a survey earlier in the year among R/C soaring enthusiasts including members of the E.C.S.S. and L.S.E., as well as those individuals who had competed in the previous meets but were unaffiliated with either of the above mentioned organizations. The results indicated that most favored a three day meet held during the AMA NATS with two separate competition classes based upon wingspan as well as a separate Scale category. Also, a combined Jr./Sr./Open meet was favored and electric winches were the launching method most preferred. The board decided that since interest seemed to be high the individual contestant should be limited to one ship in either the open or the standard class plus a scale ship if he desired. Further, the board selected the four events as follows: *Documented Scale* with emphasis placed upon flyability, *Duration* (Task I option two of the provisional rules), *Precision* (Task III with the three minute time option plus Precision-Duration Task IIA) and *Speed* (Task V). Also, the scale runway was selected to be used in the Duration and Precision event.

Dan and Neil began work on four "identical" winches which performed extremely well during the contest. Dave took charge of working up the format for scorecards in all events and I took care of the trophies and their display. Ron Martelet, a S.O.A.R. member who had experience in scale competition, was selected to obtain some volunteer scale judges from the Chicago Scalemasters for scale static judging and to oversee the scale event. The scale judges were: Bill Naylor, Ron Connors, and Ron Martelet. Mr. Naylor and Mr. Connors also judged free flight scale at the NATS.

Permission to use the Miller Meadow

site for the contest was obtained from the Cook County Forest Commission and since the site lies within the controlled airspace of O'Hare International Airport, the contest dates and site were cleared with the appropriate FAA authorities. Thanks are due the Checkerboard R/C club for relinquishing the contest site, which is their home flying field, for the duration of the contest.

Gold cups were awarded to third place in each event for each competition class as well as in Scale. Further, silver bowls were awarded to the Grand Champion and first and second runnerups. A Schwinn 10-speed bicycle donated by the Schwinn Bicycle Company, was awarded to the Grand Champion. There were five Special Achievement awards as well.

Sunday dawned a bit cloudy but by 8:00 a.m. the cloud layer had passed, the wind came up and the mercury climbed to the 90° mark where it had been during the previous few days. The projected starting time for the contest was 9:00 a.m. CST, however, from out of nowhere people with model sailplanes began to converge on Miller Meadow for in person registration prior to the contest. As a result of delays in processing these entrants, the contest got started about two hours behind schedule. During this time considerable hangar flying took place and everybody got acquainted. I understand several bets were placed on exactly how many people were finally going to compete in the contest!

Throughout the windshifts and spotty lift conditions which were to dog the meet for the next couple of days the level of sportsmanship was very high. It seemed that what was happening here was more the gathering of a brotherhood than a knock-down drag-out, blood-and-guts competition—most refreshing. The first round flown on Sunday was a three minute Precision flight. This was followed by a ten minute Duration flight. Completion of these two rounds took us to 4:00 p.m. During the



1972 Grand Champion, Ray Vandierdonck won trophy and bike. Top: Jim Porter and "Shriek."



The Soaring Nats was work as well as fun. Above, Bill Naylor judges a winning scale glider.

Keeping score is FM author Neil Liptak at the four sided scoreboard shown at left.



At right is Dan Pruss of SOAR, the 1972 Contest Director, giving a pilots' briefing before flying.

Sunday flying there were a good many spectators. The "hottest" area for them appeared to be the landing zone where one could hear the *Oh's* and *Ah's* quite well as each contestant attempted to hit paydirt in the turbulent air over the runway. The Sunday Speed round was started at 4:00 p.m. and ran until 7:30 p.m. with only half of the contestants having flown the round. It was decided to complete this round and finish the event on Monday afternoon.

Monday was characterized by shifting winds again and the winches were moved twice from their original position. All in all most of the contestants launched upwind, however, there were a few who received launches with a slight tailwind but they were usually understanding about the matter. A ten minute Duration round was flown first and the rest of Sunday's Speed round was completed. It was decided to eliminate the fifteen minute Precision-Duration task to facilitate completion of the contest within the stated time. Dan reached this decision in consultation with the contest board.

Tuesday the winds weren't as fickle as they were on Monday. In the morning the second round of the three minute Precision task was flown and in the afternoon the last round of the ten minute Duration event was flown. Competition was officially ended at about 3:30 p.m. after which time an hour elapsed before the Duration, Special Awards and Grand champion winners could be recorded in addition to the winning three man team.

Throughout the contest Ms. Linda Porter of the Schwinn Bicycle Company acted as the scorekeeper. She did a fantastic job of tabulating all of those scores and keeping the records straight throughout the contest. She also made the CD's tent a lot prettier than if Dan, Dave, and Neil had been in there alone—ugh! This year the S.O.A.R. foot awards have got to go to Cas Pels, Max Geier and Jack Hiner who acted as "Winch-meisters" and chased untold numbers of

'chutes after the launches. I think Cas and Max may now be several inches shorter than they were when the contest began! The boys of the Cicero scout troop should also be recognized for their efforts at line retrieval during the long, hot days of the contest. Many thanks are also due Bud and Earl Pell, Otto Heithecker and Ray Vandierdonck of the G.D.S.H.S. for their help in line retrieval. Art Slagle of the G.D.S. & H.S. spelled S.O.A.R.'s John Nielson as landing judge during the meet. There were only about fourteen to sixteen S.O.A.R. members on the field at any one time during the meet, and as I run through the scorecards I see many timer's initials which are not those of S.O.A.R. members. To all

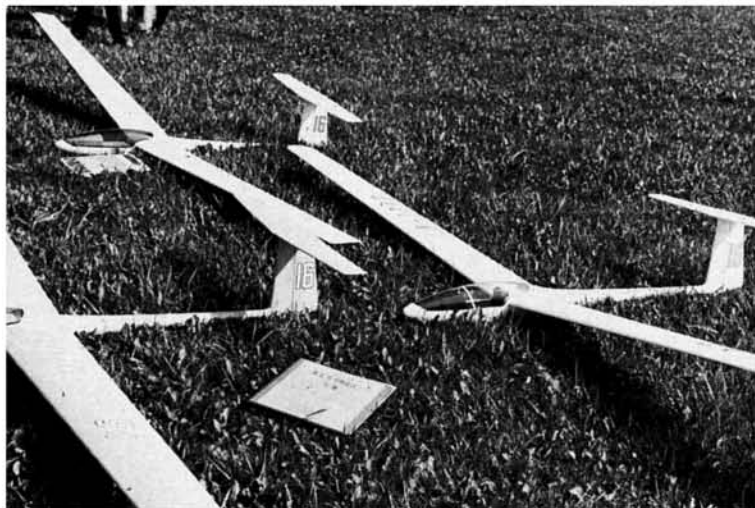
of you I say thank you for helping us with this contest. Considering the problems of size and weather encountered during the meet I feel that the contest ran pretty well and everybody deserved a round of applause for helping it to be the success that it was—it was, after all, your contest.

Last year six teams competed for the Perpetual Team Trophy, this year eighteen teams took the field! This year the Greater Detroit Soaring and Hiking Society won the award. Their team members were: Otto Heithecker, Earl Pell, and Ray Vandierdonck. This category should produce some hot competition in years to come; it certainly did this year!

The documented Scale event had six



With a real feeling of satisfaction, Andy Zope of Kankakee, Illinois, brings his ship in for the first 100-point spot landing of the 1972 Nats. Glider fliers from Connecticut to California participated.



Lined up in the grass at left are Hugh Stock's beautiful Kestral 19's by Soarcraft. Above, Cass Pels of SOAR brings a soarer homeward.

entries. Bob Andris with his Slingsby T-53B was first. Bob Thacker's Kestral was second and John Donelson's Phoebus C took third. It is anticipated that there will be a rapid growing interest in this competition event. The general consensus among the judges was that there is a good deal of improvement in the quality of the scale ships that can be made.

If any conclusion can be drawn from this year's contest it would be that pre-registration is a highly desirable thing and that perhaps some upper limit should be placed on the number of contestants on any one particular radio frequency to prevent congestion due to overused frequencies. Some contestants commented that there should be regional flyoffs with only the winners competing at the NATS. This would eliminate the "fluke" of the beginner lucking out and winning, as well as prevent him from "taking up" flight time. This method would certainly be a more efficient procedure but one wonders whether this is in keeping with the traditional spirit of the NATS.

From the data sheets and the comments

received, the decision to continue the speed event and eliminate the fifteen minute Duration-Precision task was not the most popular one. The overwhelming number of contestants did not appreciate a speed event in a thermal contest. Perhaps this event is better suited to specialized ships in slope competition. The idea in the minds of the contest board members was that in flying all the events with the same ship the field would be equalized and the best "all-around" thermal sailplane and pilot would emerge as the Grand Champion.

This is the first time a speed event was flown at a contest of this type and the board did not recognize the problems that could be incurred with it, especially in the light of the number of participants. The contestants were displeased because of the time consuming nature of the way it ran. Only one winch was used and there was usually only one sailplane on the course at any one time. Alternatives to the operation of such an event will have to be explored during sport flying sessions in order to determine the most expeditious method of handling it. The contest board in its post-

mortem of the meet is going to be working on this point intensively. It should also be noted that many contestants demonstrated a good deal of unfamiliarity with the rules of this event even though it was announced in the pre-contest publicity. Thus it would seem that this event will require a good deal of rethinking on the part of contest officials as well as practice and understanding of the rules on the part of contestants.

There was some criticism leveled at the contest regarding the numbers of events flown (or attempted to be flown). In answer to this it must be remembered that the provisional rules must be tried out and tested in order to ascertain their weak points. To this end the NATS certainly seems to be the place to attempt such evaluation using a relatively large number of contestants—this, basically, was the charge of the contest board.

Further, if the size of the contest continues at its present level, or increases in size, it is obvious that no one club in the country has the manpower to efficiently support it. Perhaps a joint sponsorship between neighboring clubs is the answer. ☐



Kirk Hanson came to the NATS from Huntington Beach, California, with his new Airtronics three-pound Grand Esprit, a fantastic thermal soarer.

SOARING NATS WINNERS

Grand Champion: Ray Vandierdonck
Grand Champion, first runnerup: John Donelson
Grand Champion, second runnerup: Otto Heithecker
Open Precision: first—Rick Walters, second—Otto Heithecker, third—Ray Vandierdonck
Standard Precision: first—John Donelson, second—Jeff Walters, third—Mark Smith
Open Duration: first—Dale Nutter, second—Ray Vandierdonck, third—Jack Hiner
Standard Duration: first—Mark Smith, second—Sam Miller, third—Rod Smith
Open Speed: first—Hugh Stock, second—Dave Burt, third—Dwight Hartman
Standard Speed: first—Bud Pell, second—Jim Simpson, third—Mark Smith
Scale: first—Bob Andris, second—Bob Thacker, third—John Donelson
Best Original Design: Ray Vandierdonck—Nimbus
Best Technical Achievement: Bill Wargo—electric winch and retrieval system
Best Performance by an American Kit: John Donelson—Windfree kitted by Mark's Models
Best Monokote: Doug Munn—Intrepid
Best Junior: Yoshinori Sato (Japan)—8 years old



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