

AMA's National Miniature Aircraft Championships

The 'Nats' is short for what used to be known as the National Model Airplane Championships. More recently, in an effort to upgrade the image of model aviation from the general public concept of paper-covered rubber-band-powered toys the words 'Miniature Aircraft' have been substituted. Either way this annual week long event is the world's biggest model meet, with over 60 competition events, more than 600 trophies, and over a thousand contestants.

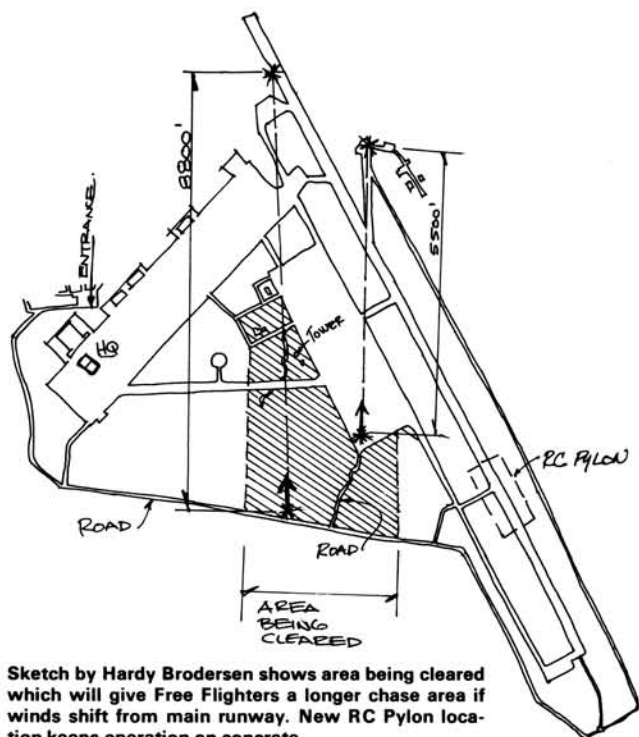
The Nats is what amounts to AMA's annual convention. Any AMA member can participate, along with friends or relatives, so the Nats has become a great family affair; for many the big annual vacation event of their lives. There's no discrimination or qualification—the only requirement is payment of the entry fee—so novices can rub shoulders or share flight lines with the experts. That's what makes the Nats so great; the opportunity for any member to be side-by-side with their more famous heroes.

It has been this way for many years. Ever since World War II, military support was involved and this made it relatively easy for AMA to operate this huge undertaking. That is now changed since recent austere military budgets prevented continuance of such support. So AMA has been going it alone the last two years except for some model industry sponsorship which has covered about 10% of the costs.

The 1975 Nats may be the final test to determine whether AMA can operate this annual event in the same general manner as the Nats of many years past. When the U.S. Navy ended 25 years of support in 1972, AMA assumed the total responsibility for carrying on the Nats program. This meant substituting AMA manpower to replace over 100 Navy personnel, arranging for officials' transportation to replace the Navy's airlift, finding Nats sites equivalent to those provided by naval air stations, coming up with many thousands of dollars worth of supplies and equipment formerly provided by the Navy.

In 1973, the first year of taking over from the Navy, AMA rented an airfield at Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Two key factors were involved. One was to utilize the relatively nearby (Chicago area) source of manpower which had been part of the Navy Nats operations at Glenview, Illinois, from 1970 through 1972. The other was the hope of recovering the cost of airfield rental (\$15,000) by charging admission to the public. The first factor was successfully applied—the Chicago area source of manpower reduced the official's transportation problem considerably. The second factor, however, was not successfully achieved—the income from admission fees was considerably less than necessary to offset the cost of airfield rental.

Top photo shows Free Flight launch area clearing as of early April '75, to be expanded considerably by Nats time, as per sketch. Modern air-conditioned dorms, like the one in bottom photo, at McNeese State University (about four miles from Nats airfield), will be provided again this year—with breakfast also to be available at the university cafeteria.



Sketch by Hardy Brodersen shows area being cleared which will give Free Flighters a longer chase area if winds shift from main runway. New RC Pylon location keeps operation on concrete.



Also, the airfield was too small and operations were too complicated by problems resulting from full-scale aircraft flights from the same field. The combination of 1973 problems made it necessary to find another future Nats location. Thus in 1974 the Nats moved to Lake Charles, Louisiana. There the problems were somewhat reversed. The airfield was available at no charge, it was large enough, and there was no full-scale aircraft interaction, but there was also no nearby source of Nats manpower. The latter factor caused a severe financial problem—the cost of providing transportation assistance for the dozens of volunteer officials needed to staff the event.

The cost in itself was not so much the problem as was the fact that income from entry fees and sponsorships was less than anticipated. Although attendance was greater than ever had been achieved for a Nats in that part of the country (in comparison with those Nats which had been held in Dallas) it was not as great as had been true of the Chicago area. Yet the 1974 Nats was big—with over 1400 registered—so the location was relatively good in terms of AMA membership participation, but the number was not enough, with the previous entry fee structure, to offset the cost of transporting many officials from further away than usual.



Nats logo designed by Bob Lopshire will be used in many ways—bumper stickers, posters, Nats program book.

Because this factor also exists for 1975, the financial problem has been approached from two directions: an increase in entry fees and reduced compensation for officials. Thus everyone will pay more to participate in the Nats, whether to work or fly. But the cost of participation is still being held to the minimum possible for such a great experience.

The Nats should be even better for 1975. Many changes will be seen this year, practically all based on eliminating problems that were part of the 1974 operation. RC Pattern, Pylon, and Scale fliers, for example, should be able to stay out of mud situations since access and pit areas will be on concrete this year—a much improved RC site layout was developed as a result of joint consultations between Nats officials and contestants. And RC Sailplane fliers will have three full days of competition instead of only ten hours, made possible by use of a separate site.

Free Flighters should find it much easier to chase and retrieve models—considerable clearing of trees and brush is currently underway and a new upwind launch site will be available for situations where wind drift is not parallel to the long runway. In general, much more mowed and cleared area is being provided. For Control Line, Combat fliers should be closer to the rest of the Nats action as a new location on the

Going to the Nats? Read the Fine Print!

If you wait until you get there it may be too late!

The annual event known as the National Model Airplane Championships is the world's biggest model meet, enjoyed by many hundreds. But there are always some who end up unhappy. In most cases the unhappiness was caused by not taking the time to read available information as to how the events operate and why.

The official entry form is part of the problem. It is complex and full of fine print, so that the natural tendency is to set it aside for later—or maybe never! Yet all that fine print has evolved over the years as a necessary evil, in order to help bring order to what adds up to a lot of complex information.

Unfortunately, as with so many things these days, the entry form and information has become complicated because a few people cause problems by ignoring common sense and fairness concerning the rights and privileges of others. Consequently it has become necessary to impose tight deadlines, restrict some activities, and make all kinds of special rules that normally are not needed at other model meets.

Much of the detail is necessary simply because of the numbers of peo-

ple involved: typically over 2,000 (counting contestants, helpers, relatives and friends). There are obvious communications problems when dealing with so many, especially when they are dispersed over a huge airfield most of the time. And when an event runs for a week, there are many problems involving what is happening from day to day and location to location.

All this is to say that the National Meet, also known as the Nats, is a very complicated operation. But it is mostly a very orderly and enjoyable experience for those who make the effort to be informed. The Nats entry form offers a wealth of information, and particular attention is called here to some details of that information which have been overlooked or ignored by some—to their eventual disappointment.

Some people, for example, simply show up at the Nats and expect to be able to participate as contestants regardless of arrival time. Most, however, have learned that advance entry by mail is far easier and significantly cheaper. Others depend upon so-called "late entry" at the Nats, even though they know this is far more expensive. But the

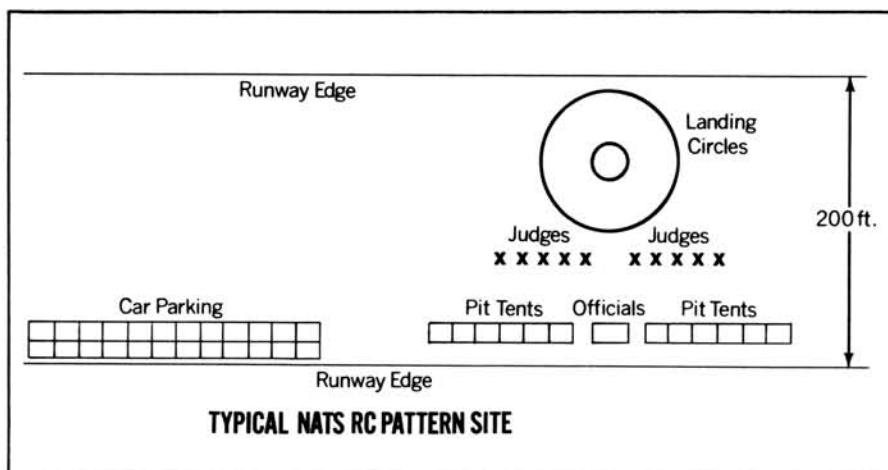
saddest situation involves the person who doesn't realize that there are deadlines, varying from event to event, when late entry is possible—and then only until the cutoff time that day.

Cutoff times have been experimented with from year to year, but none of the variations have ever made much difference. Almost always someone shows up a few minutes too late! The deadlines are made as late as practical while still manageable. But the cutoff time is sharp. It has to be that way because experience over many years has shown that, no matter what time was picked, some people tend to wait until the last minute, with considerable disruption to headquarters operations and much overtime work.

This year a special attempt has been made to make requirements easier on contestants, but careful reading of the Nats entry form is still necessary to avoid surprise and possible disappointment. The Nats, which has gotten to be the world's biggest model meet, is manageable only by tight planning and time demands upon all participants. Those in the know don't have problems and enjoy the Nats thoroughly. Those who don't bother to become informed are often disappointed. Disappointment is avoidable and unnecessary—read the fine print!

Nats Meetings. The regular AMA membership meeting as provided in the AMA bylaws is scheduled to be held at Chennault Airbase on Wednesday, August 6, at 6:30 pm; all members are invited.

The Nominating Committee, open only to AMA vice-presidents or their appointed delegates, will meet at 8 pm on Wednesday, August 6. The beginning of this meeting signals the closing time for AMA officer nominations (president and vice-presidents for Districts I, III, V, VII, IX and XI for the 1976-77 term). See the April AMA Monthly Mailing or write to AMA HQ for nomination procedures.



field is planned, near the other Control Line events. And better spectator safety will be provided now that last year's fence project has been completed.

Better field concessions for food and drinks are currently being negotiated to relieve the need for stocking up on such items before coming to the field. This should ease the problem of being out on the field for many hours. Note: the unrestricted access to flying at Lake Charles was a unique experience for most of the 1974 participants—they could literally fly from dawn to dusk, in contrast to the typical 8 to 5 situation of previous Nats. The same is true for '75.

Breakfast will be an easier experience for 1975. This year the college cafeteria will be open in the morning, so there will be less crowding of the few 24-hour restaurants in the area—less time will need to

be allowed in the morning for the many (almost 700 last year) who were lodged at the university dormitories. And night life at the Nats will be enhanced this year since the university will be the central gathering place for those staying at the dorms or in area motels. This will be brought about by opening of a huge student lounge area next to the cafeteria, right in the middle of the dormitory complex. Snacks and soft drinks will be available in this lounge area. Lots of space and comfortable seating for small clusters or large groups. The lack of this kind of gathering point for evenings was sorely missed during the '74 Nats, so this new arrangement should help the togetherness and fun for '75.

More motel space is available for '75. A new Days Inn is now open, near the Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge, just north of the airfield. And a new Rodeway Inn is

available (expected to be the headquarters and lodging place for RC Sailplane participants), just to the west of Lake Charles at Sulphur, Louisiana. Added at the Sheraton Motel this year is a new 24-hour restaurant called the Cajun Kitchen. In general, the motel situation in Lake Charles is excellent—besides those already named there are the usual well known places such as Holiday Inn, Downtowner, Ramada Inn, Quality Inn, and a number of independents. For those interested in more complete motel information, a request to AMA Headquarters will get the latest list.

The Indoor event schedule has been simplified for '75. All official Indoor events will be flown at the Lake Charles Civic Center, only three miles from the Nats airfield. This excellent site was rated superior by many Indoor contestants last year, due to a better ceiling structure, than the

National Contest Late Entry Information

Advance Entry (by mail) savings are big and the Basic Fee is refundable if you don't show at the Nats, so this is the best bet—but if you don't have any choice here's what Late Entry is all about.

Most Nats contestants already will have entered by the advance entry postmark deadline of July 1, but this year late entries will also be permitted at the contest site for almost the entire Nats period. The primary requisite for all events is that late entries be accomplished by 1 hr. before the close of processing for the event concerned. For Scale no later than 1 hr. before the close of when models must be turned in for static judging, and for RC, no later than 1 hr. before the end of transmitter processing for a particular event.

The full schedule of event flying, plus Scale turn-in deadlines and RC transmitter processing times, is printed in the Official Nats Entry Form Instructions. Anyone who thinks he might

enter should obtain the 1975 Nats entry form which also includes much other useful information; request from AMA HQ., 806 Fifteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, and please include a pre-addressed envelope. Late entries for the Indoor events and all outdoor events (RC—including Soaring, CL, FF, Scale) must be made at Chennault Airbase, Lake Charles, La. The AMA HQ office at the airbase will be open for registration and late entry, from August 3 through August 9—basically 8 am to noon and 1 pm to 5 pm each day.

Late Basic Entry Fee for Juniors and Seniors is \$3 (same as advance fee, and includes entry in three events) and \$25 for Open members (no events included). Event fees for late entries, or for events added at the Nats by advance entrants, are \$5 per event for all age categories—except RC, which are \$10 per event.

Mechanics Fee, advance or late, is \$3; provides identification and field access privileges equivalent to contestants. Available to AMA members only. A Nats-only membership is included in the \$3 fee for members of a contestant's family.

Nats Housing. University dormitories about three miles from Chennault Airbase are available for three groups; males only, couples, and families. For individuals and couples, the rate is \$4 per person per night, double occupancy. For families consisting of more than just a couple—or for groups—a family-type cluster is available at the rate of \$7 per person per night, except no charge for children under age 16. Dormitory housing arrangements are made through AMA either in advance by mail or in person at the Nats.

Campsites for tents and trailers are available on Chennault Airbase for a flat rate of \$10 for the week per site. Pay at the Nats. The camp area includes portable toilets but no water or electricity to individual sites.

Goodyear hangar at Houston. Some fliers who flew at both sites got better performances at Lake Charles, with its 55-foot flat ceiling, than at Houston with its narrowing domed girder ceiling almost twice as high. This use of one site instead of two also avoids a conflicting schedule with outdoor events.

New for most outdoor FAI Free Flight events this year will be flying by rounds; similar to World Championships schedules. Included will be a mid-afternoon break to test the current thinking that flying during maximum thermal conditions should be minimized. This has produced a flight schedule for these events that means starting early and finishing late, compared to other events. The afternoon break will also permit flying in other events.

Radio Control Pylon and Pattern will be utilizing a two-shift schedule arrangement; Pylon from 8 am to 2 pm and Pattern from 2 to 8 pm. The shift arrangement helps overcome some of last year's problems. Pattern fliers need not be delayed by early morning low ceiling fog which prevents seeing the model at the tops of maneuvers, nor will they and the judges be bothered by early morning sun in their eyes. Pylon fliers, on the other hand, are not similarly bothered by these conditions and they won't have to wait for Pattern fliers to



Nats HQ, registration, hobby shop, workshop and evening model processing in left double hangar. Delta Dart and other youth programs in, or in front of, big black hangar at right.

finish up before they can start, as has happened in some past years. Soaring fliers will also not have to worry about being delayed by the finish of an earlier event—they will be at their own exclusive site. And they will have ten winches available to keep the flying going without interruption due to launching problems.

RC fliers will also enjoy improvements at the Lake Area Radio Kontrol Society's practice field. Since 1974 the LARKS have air-conditioned their clubhouse, installed refreshment facilities and bathrooms, set up worktables in the pit area and even have a hobby shop right on the site. This is one of the country's outstanding club fields, with a concrete runway!

In general 1975 Nats contestants will find themselves more welcome than ever. Nats posters will be all over town and local citizens will have bumper stickers that say "Welcome Back, Y'all!" That's the message this year, and it is backed by many special efforts to make this a most memo-

orable Nats. Plan for it now, whether to fly or spectate. Get the full details by sending a stamped and addressed envelope to AMA HQ for the '75 Nats Entry Form and Information. Send now to: AMA, 806 Fifteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Money-saving hint: Late entry fees are higher than ever this year. Avoid this cost by entering by mail before the July 1 deadline, rather than waiting to do it at the Nats site. If you don't make it to the Nats your basic entry fee will be refunded. So, enter in advance by mail—the savings are significant.

In the meantime plan your vacation for Lake Charles with a side trip to New Orleans or to NASA at Houston, depending upon what direction you're coming from. This will be the 44th Nats; they began in 1923. It's still the greatest model aviation experience ever. Some say it's like love—when it's good it's great; when it's bad it's still pretty good!

OFFICIAL SCHEDULE, 1975 NATIONAL CONTEST, LAKE CHARLES, LA.

	Sunday August 3	Monday August 4	Tuesday August 5	Wednesday August 6	Thursday August 7	Friday August 8	Saturday August 9	Sunday August 10
Free Flight <i>8 am—5 pm except as noted.</i> FF <i>FAI events by rounds planned for 6:30 am start, 8 pm end.</i>	INDOOR HL Glider <i>9 am—5 pm</i> AMA Scale <i>5-9 pm</i>	INDOOR <i>9 am—5 pm</i> Stick Cabin Paper Stick FAI Stick Easy B	A-2 Towline B Gas Payload	A-2 Towline Flyoffs A Gas Unlim. Rub.	FAI Power A-1 Towline HL Glider Scale Rubber <i>8 am—noon</i> Scale Gas <i>8 am—noon</i> Peanut Scale <i>8 am—noon</i>	FAI Power Flyoffs 1/2A Gas Coupe d'H. Helicopter CL III Cargo	Wakefield C Gas Rocket ROW Gas	Wakefield Flyoffs
Control Line <i>8 am—noon and 1—5 pm except as noted.</i> CL <i>Event time schedules may be revised depending upon weather and number of entrants.</i>		Jr. Combat <i>1-5 pm</i> Jr. Rat R. <i>8 am—noon</i> Sr. Rat R. <i>1-5 pm</i> FAI Team R. <i>8 am—noon</i>	Sr. Combat 1/2A Prof. Proto 1/2A Proto Op. Rat R. Prof. Carrier	Op. Combat 1/2A Speed Jr. Stunt <i>1-5 pm</i> Op. Scale R. Carrier I Carrier II	Op. Combat Finals Jet Speed C Speed Sr. Stunt Jr. Scale R. <i>8 am—noon</i> Sr. Scale R. <i>1-5 pm</i> AMA Scale <i>noon—8 pm</i>	FAI Combat B Proto B Speed Form. 40 Op. Stunt Jr.-Sr. Mouse R. Cl. II	Jr. Slow Combat <i>8-10 am</i> Sr. Slow Combat <i>10 am—noon</i> Op. Slow Combat <i>1-5 pm</i> A Speed FAI Speed Op. Stunt Finals <i>10 am—2 pm</i> J. Walker Fly-off <i>3 pm</i> Op. Mouse R. Cl. II	
Radio Control RC	<i>8 am—2 pm</i> <i>2 pm—8 pm</i> Soaring <i>8 am—4 pm</i>	Q.M. Pylon A & B Pattern Scale Standard Open	Q.M. Pylon A & B Pattern Scale Standard Open	Q.M. Pylon D Pattern Qual. Scale Standard Open	Form. I D Pattern Qual.	Form. I D Pat. Finals AMA Scale	Form. I D Pat. Finals AMA Scale	Sport Scale <i>8 am—noon & 1-6 pm</i>

Note: The entry form has many more details concerning deadlines for late entry, transmitter processing, model processing (including judging), registration and awards.

AMA

NATIONALS



**LAKE CHARLES
LOUISIANA**