

YOU CAN RUN A CONTEST!

by

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I'd be willing to bet there are hundreds of good, solid model clubs out there who would just LOVE to host their own contest, but are afraid of the complexity of the task. This article is written to encourage those folks to *GO FOR IT* by filling in some details and suggesting some ways to get things done. Every situation is going to be different; indeed, even *sequential* contests by the same club will be different in some respects, but the ideas put forward here may be all your club needs to jump the hurdle and put together a fine meet.

If there were a single secret to a successful contest, it would be *PLANNING*. It's safe to say that there can't be too much planning! So begin at a club meeting *at least thirty days* (by the rule book) but as much as a year in advance, by appointing a committee to plan your contest. If your AMA club is fortunate enough to have a member whose membership category is CONTEST DIRECTOR, then you're already on your way. If not, select someone who is willing to put in the time and effort, and who is a good organizer and administrator -- never mind his or her piloting skills. Any Open class AMA member can become a Contest Director, or "CD," by calling the AMA at 1-800-I-FLY-AMA. Ask to speak to the Competition Desk, and tell them you want to take the test to be a CD. They'll send you a form with the 20-question OPEN BOOK test and a current rules book. Study the rule book, noting mostly the general rules for each type of contest -- Control Line, Free Flight, or Radio Control. Sorry -- you can't specialize in *just* Radio Control or one of the others -- AMA expects you to be qualified to run *any* of the three categories. The test is not difficult, since you can use the rule book while taking it, but you must be careful to read each question well, so that you don't misinterpret it.

When you have finished the test and completed the form (they're on the same sheet), you mail it *and the required \$20.00 processing fee* directly back to AMA at the address shown. AMA grades your test, and if you passed (and you will!), they then forward it to your District Vice President, who can approve or disapprove it. Sarah Pryor, in the AMA's Competition Department, told me she has never seen one disapproved. She also said this approval process generally takes only a couple of weeks, from AMA's receiving your test to the final approval. So becoming a CD is really a fairly easy task, but it should never be taken lightly -- we want the very best people to be directing our meets. When your CD application is finally approved, you will receive a fairly thick envelope stuffed with gobs of forms and information sheets. Much of this material may be oriented toward other categories of flying. Mine had a fairly extensive set of suggestions and score sheets for control line and free flight contests, which, though interesting to me personally, are not required for you if you are running an R/C contest. There is also a very good "Contest Director's Guide," which contains many general suggestions of great value; this article, in fact, elaborates upon and expands that guide to a considerable degree.

Now -- let's say you either *have* a CD in your club or have selected a candidate and gotten that business underway. The next important step is to select the type and class of contest you want to hold, and pick a date for it. Assume further, since my own experiences will serve me best, that yours is a radio control club. You must now decide whether you're going to hold a simple "Fun Fly" or whether you're going to put on a real, slam-bang contest that can attract pilots from near and far.

Your rule book tells you how to establish the "class," or level of your contest. For example, the AMA Nationals is a class AAAA meet -- the highest of any. Below that would be a regional contest, with a classification of AAA. My own club's last five annual meets have all been class AA, which is still a relatively high rating in view of the fact that most of the contests you see listed in

the AMA Contest Calendar are class A or even class C -- essentially a Fun Fly with some elements of competition and possibly prizes. Again, let's go with the Class AA, since that is a realistic and significant attempt for a club taking on its first meet.

Now you have your contest rating decided upon. Next, talk with your club membership and select a date. Since a class AA meet is a fairly major one, consider holding a two-day, Saturday-Sunday contest. Most competition fliers, if they're going to drive up to three hundred miles or so to your contest, want to have a chance to get in at least four or five rounds of flying. Check the AMA Contest Calendar in the back pages of *Model Aviation* magazine to avoid selecting a date that may be already protected, and settle on at least *three* weekends in order of your preference that would be suitable to the club, keeping in mind that you're probably going to need at least fifteen to twenty club members and/or their spouses to work at the meet. It's also a good idea to touch base with your local Chamber of Commerce. It may be that you can tie your contest in with some local celebration, and this gets you some very good free publicity.

Let's pause just a moment and talk about the "sanction" business. Is it really necessary to "sanction" your meet with the AMA? Well, yes and no. The answer is generally "yes" if you:

- 1) want to have your contest "protected" from other, nearby contests of the same nature;
 - 2) want your contest to get official recognition as a bona fide meet and not just an informal get-together;
 - 3) want your contest to be insured against liability;
 - 4) want your competitors to be AMA members for insurance purposes, and
 - 5) want your contest to appear in the "Contest Calendar" section of *Model Aviation* magazine.
- The answer is "no" if these matters are not applicable. Since we've already decided to hold a Class AA meet, we'll make the assumption that your answer to the sanction question is "yes." When you've settled the sanction question and your dates, call the AMA Competition Desk again and ask for a *Contest Sanction Packet*. In a few days you'll receive an envelope with a sanction application.

The main thing to do now -- and "now" means at least thirty days and up to one year before the date of your contest, and the earlier the better -- is to fill out the information requested on the sanction form. It will ask you for the class of your proposed contest, and which events you intend to hold. Note that the class of contest you select has a bearing upon the number of rule book events you must offer: a class AA meet *must* offer at least two events from the current rule book, and *must* offer at least four sets of important awards through at least two places. This information is found in detail in your rule book under "Guidelines for Contest Coordinators." Read this section closely, for it gives you important information about submitting your sanction application. The sanction form will ask you to list the events you plan to hold by their number in the rule book. Thus, if you're going to hold an R/C Scale Meet, you might choose to offer 511, R/C Sportsman Sport Scale, and 512, R/C Expert Sport Scale, as your two *required* events for a class AA meet. But, in order to get some of your newer or younger flyers involved, you can also add another event, such as R/C Fun Scale (Event 520), a much less intense event which allows the newest soloed pilot to compete in his/her first contest. Some clubs, including mine this year, even divide up the Fun Scale event into "Novice" and "Advanced" segments; the novices being those who have never entered a contest, or who have entered and placed lower than third. The reasoning here is that most inexperienced flyers get a pretty good case of nerves in their first or second meets, and by allowing them to fly only against their equals, we "level the field" for them. Another advantage of offering the Fun Scale is that it allows these newcomers to fly their trainer aircraft, rather than having to build up a detailed, highly competitive ship. Read the rule book paragraph

on Fun Scale to understand more fully this event's advantages. Obviously, the more advanced flyers compete in the Advanced segment of Fun Scale. And by the way, if you're going to divide up Fun Scale into Novice and Advanced, or *meddle in any other way with the event rules as found in the rule book*, your sanction application and contest announcements must include this information. Experienced contest flyers don't like to arrive at a contest and find the rules have been changed. Our club also offers an unofficial event called R/C Team Scale, in which a competitor is allowed to fly a model which he/she did not build, or only partially built. Since there is no R/C Team Scale event in the rule book, you can be very flexible in setting the requirements for flyer/builder.

Now -- we have our CD selected, our preferred dates chosen, and our events to be offered. Send your completed sanction form, together with whatever fee is applicable (this will be on the form) to your *AMA DISTRICT CONTEST COORDINATOR* -- NOT TO THE AMA! The District Contest Coordinator's job is to see whether your contest, if sanctioned, would compete with any other similar contests on that same date, and within the "protected" radius, which is 300 miles for our class AA meet. If it does, he/she will likely give you a phone call and ask if your second or third date would be acceptable; if not, your sanction will get approved, and be sent on to the AMA for final processing. After that, you will receive an official sanction certificate from AMA, and you can really begin to cook. Note also that, if you hold the same type of contest on the same weekend of the same month three years running, you qualify for "traditional" status. Your club then has first choice of that usual date from then on, and automatically takes precedence over other contests, provided the sanction application is filed at least six months before the next meet.

We ought to look now at whether your club needs additional insurance for your contest. In general, if your meet is to be held at your regular flying field, which is insured in your club charter as the place you regularly fly, you shouldn't need any *extra* insurance. However, if your club field is not adequate to handle the expected attendance, or if your landlord, for example, does not like large numbers of cars parking on his wheat field, then you may have to find a different location. In that event, you would want to consider a separate insurance binder from the AMA for the purposes of protecting your club and the site owner from liability resulting from the contest. Again, simply pick up the phone and dial the AMA's toll-free number - 1-800-435-9262 - and get all the info you need.

And now -- it's *COMMITTEE TIME!* Don't wait until a month before your contest to get your committees rolling; some of them (the Trophy Committee, for example) will need several months at a minimum to complete their work. Here are some committees we use, and what their jobs are:

Publicity - obvious. But how do they do it? First, get your newsletter editor on track, and make sure he/she keeps the progress of the contest committee in front of the membership in *every issue!* Then, we send or personally deliver *written notices* of our contest to our local newspaper, our Chamber of Commerce and our local community access television channel. We ask them to begin including our meet as early as six weeks before the meet. If you get to your Chamber of Commerce early enough, they may be able to include your meet on an annual calendar of Chamber events. Also, visit several local radio stations and ask them if they will run PSAs, or Public Service Announcements, the week before your contest. Provide them with the basic info: time, place, date, and what the people will see. If you happen to have a media person in your club, see if he/she will help prepare these notices. Does your favorite radio station have a "Community Newsline" talk show daily or once a week? Often they are desperately looking for good subject matter, and you might get a fine fifteen minute exposure on the radio. Got somebody good with computer graphics? Have them make up some neat-looking posters with clip art, and then print them on high-visibility, day-glo paper and take them around to merchants, asking if you can place them in store windows. Hint: **always** promise to come back and remove them immediately following the meet; most will tell you not to worry about it, they'll do it themselves, but it's a nice touch to offer. Be creative -- think of other ways to get your word out: church groups, youth fellowships, etc. Jump the fences in your imaginations!

Getting the word out to out-of-area modelers is another matter. Your first year, you can write letters detailing your meet to various clubs in your area. Tell them the scope of the meet, which events you will be holding, what kinds of prizes you will offer, and whether you offer on-site camping and food.

Trophies and prizes. This can be a tough one, but it's manageable if you approach it properly. Too many, *far too many* prize committee chairpeople simply feel all they need to do is write a form letter asking for merchandise donations, run off a bunch of copies, and fire them out to every manufacturer and retailer advertising in every model magazine. Enough of them, they figure, will send something back for the prize table. **THIS IS NOT THE WAY, FOLKS!** Many of the manufacturers and marketers of some of the best prizes will not even look at such a letter. They would quickly go broke if they responded to even half of these cheapo requests. But here's a way to have a better chance at getting some of those neat things: find somebody in your club who is thinking about *buying* that item anyway, or even two or three people. Then, send in the order for the items and *ask in the letter if they would contribute an extra one as a prize for your contest.* That way the dealer sells an item or two and then *gives* one away; you have your prize and the marketer has *two* items in the hands of modelers. Another way, probably more productive, is to ask if the dealer would contribute gift certificates for his products, offering, say, twenty-five or fifty percent off. Most will readily do this, since if the winner of that certificate does not especially want that item, he can either give away the certificate or simply not use it. This method allows the dealer to control his losses more closely. One caveat here: be wary of manufacturers who send you large discount coupons off their *suggested retail* prices; these can often be beat at your local hobby shop, and the contestant winning one of these as a first or second prize may not be back next year.

If your club is a large one, with a fairly substantial budget for the contest, you might consider purchasing at your best cost a nice, high-quality model kit, or even a complete new radio system, and use it as a *door prize* to encourage your younger modelers to enter the contest. The only requirement (if it doesn't violate local or state laws) is that the entrant enter and fly one official flight; this gets his/her name in the pot for the prize. This ploy was not too successful with my club last year, since we just didn't have very many youngsters ready for the contest. You could raffle a major item such as this, rather than giving it as a door prize, if you think there are enough interested ticket-buyers to make a raffle successful.

For our last four contests, we have handmade our first-place trophies using an idea given to me by my old scale mentor, Dave Platt. We have nice wooden plaques made up, with brass plates to attach to them denoting the event and date. Then we have a few of our members who are interested in plastic model construction to build *either the left or right half* of several 1/72 scale plastic models from kits at the hobby shop. These are then painted and detailed to a reasonable degree, and finally, sanded on a disk sander exactly down the middle (for most models), and carefully attached to the wooden plaque with thick CA. (See photos.) They make wonderfully appropriate and highly desirable trophies. We have found that the quality of these first place trophies is one of the strongest drawing points of our contest. If interest is high enough, perhaps a detailed article on how to make these plaques may be forthcoming.

Food. Your concessions committee *has* to be one of the two or three most important to your contest. Our club is fortunate to have a great group of very supportive wives and families who enjoy putting this together; see if some of your members' spouses would be interested in helping out. You'll need a chair person, or even better, two co-chairs, so that the entire burden doesn't fall on one person. Find out who will be available to work the booth, then make up a "watch list" so all will know who is working and when. Distribute it to all who have volunteered to work. Decide on what you're going to offer at your food stand. We have done well with our "Full Scale Meal Deal" plate: a hamburger, chips, a brownie, and a soft drink of choice, for \$3.25. Of course, any of these items can be purchased separately, but the "deal" is a better value. Many of our folks make various kinds of cookies and brownies to contribute to the concessions stand, and we price them

attractively. And believe it or not, Verna Courtright, our flying field landlady, gets up at 5 a.m. to make the dough, and then shows up at our concessions stand at 7 a.m. on contest morning and personally fries up twelve dozen delicious, hot donuts for us to sell! You can probably get a dollar for a 12-ounce cold drink on a hot day, but you'll sell more than twice as many if you keep the price to fifty cents. Make the concessions stand support the contest, not the other way around; keep your prices reasonably low, and this will, more than any other single factor, bring out-of-town flyers back year after year.

You may find, as we did, that it is not necessary to take a long lunch break from competition flying. So we use a single propane grill supplied by a club member to grill burgers for lunch; it can cook up to eight burgers at a time, and if we continue flying through the noon hour, it will take care of the demand. We found the pilots would rather get in more rounds of flying than stop all activity for an hour. But we also rent a large commercial charcoal grill, on a trailer frame, from a local heating/cooling company. The trailer grill's function comes later in the evening Saturday. For when competitive flying is done, we put on a Saturday night steak feed that has become legendary in the Pacific Northwest! For eight dollars, you get a large platter with an 8-ounce sirloin steak, cooked to order, a big serving of potato salad, baked beans, lettuce salad, another brownie, watermelon, and your choice of soft drink! Our chef, Orville Miller, is one of our longtime club members, and we recently presented him with a specially embroidered apron in appreciation of his efforts. We sell the steak feed tickets during the day, with a cut-off about one o'clock, and then call in and pick up the steaks, freshly cut, from a local meat market. Whether you have a Saturday night dinner or not, be sure to have plenty of large trash cans with plastic liners for the used paper plates. We have also found that the plastic knives found in picnic ware are pretty flimsy, so we ask club members to put masking tape with their names on their steak knives at home and bring them in to use.

Several years ago we tried offering "charge accounts" to registered contestants; we just kept a "tab" on each one and asked each to pay up at the end of the meet. We believe this substantially increased our food sales, since one didn't have to fish around for the right change every time he got thirsty.

On the other hand, if your club is not into doing the food booth thing, see if your local Rotary or Lions Club or perhaps a Boy Scout troop would like to bring a food trailer out and make themselves some money during the weekend. Just bear in mind that our club of about thirty-five people and their wives makes about seven to eight hundred dollars from the food booth alone. Enough said.

Field Preparation. Appoint one willing worker as the *Field Preparation* chair. This means making sure the grass is mowed a day or two before the meet, and (if you have this problem) that the county or other appropriate agency sprays for insect control in a timely manner. It also means making up signs to put on the roadside within a few miles, directing entrants and spectators to your contest, and on the day before, of lining out your "foul line" according to your CD's instructions. See your rule book section entitled "Radio Control Scale Flight Judging Guide," paragraph 3, for an explanation of this line. It includes having plenty of trash cans on hand, and some marked "For Aluminum Cans Only." The Field Prep person may also want to rent or otherwise obtain several large canopies, for shelter in case of inclement weather, or just for shade. If your club doesn't own one, check the local rental agency. Perhaps your town's Rotary or Lions club has one they will loan you, or even the local downtown association of merchants. Be sure to put one up to shelter your judges from the sun or rain; this will have a significant bearing on the moods of your judges, and you want them *happy!* He or she should provide for some sort of public address system, so that announcements can be made and pilots called to the ready line when appropriate. If your club doesn't have one of these, ask your local law enforcement office if they have a portable bull horn or two they would loan you for the weekend. If not, does your town have a National Guard Armory? Check with them -- they often have excellent systems they use for inspections and outdoor formations, which you may be able to use. If your field is not

equipped with picnic tables, ask around at local churches or lodges; find enough to seat the expected number of guests at mealtimes, at least. You can rent folding chairs for a dollar a day or so if necessary. And your Field Prep person should arrange for a sheltered transmitter impound station, and a *reliable* individual to man it. Pay close attention here; transmitters have been known to "grow legs" when the integrity of impound keepers was not the highest. That's one of the quickest ways to end your club's successful contest streak.

One of the most important tasks of your Field Prep chairperson is to arrange for extra restroom facilities. These can usually be rented for less than \$100 per weekend, and will add considerably to the comfort of your pilots and spectators. One of our ladies came up with the idea of leaving a plastic jug of tap water, a bar of bath soap dropped down into an old panty hose leg (so it could be tied to the porta-potty door handle), and a roll of paper towels just outside the stall. The more discriminating of your guests will thank you dearly for this bit of thoughtfulness.

Finally, make sure your Field Prep person is able to lay hands on a portable 110-volt generator or two, to keep the coffee pot perking through the day, and don't forget to lay in extra cans of gas for it.

Judges. Appoint first a *Chief Judge*. This is one of the *most* important people on your staff. This person does not need to be (indeed, probably *should not* be) the best hot dog flyer in the club, or even the best overall flyer or test pilot. This person needs to be one whose leadership is accepted by all members. He/she must be of impeccable integrity, and possess excellent attention to detail, for it is the Chief Judge who will need to know the most in detail about the rules to be followed. In my own opinion, I feel the Chief Judge should have a better knowledge base about the static judging and flying judging rules than even the CD, since the CD is concerned more with the broad aspects of preparing for and running the meet. The Chief Judge will be responsible for selecting a panel of static and flight judges for the contest, and for briefing them accurately on the rules by which they are to judge. Our Chief Judge has an annual orientation session a few days before the contest, a full evening devoted to educating his static and flight judges on what they are to look for. He uses small display models to illustrate what certain maneuvers should look like, especially when done by different type aircraft (for example, an inside loop done by a J-3 Cub versus a P-51 Mustang). He makes certain the judges know what areas they should and should not consider in static judging, i.e., cockpit interiors (see rule book, "Radio Control Sport Scale," Static Judging, paragraph 5.3). He should design a schedule for judges, so that a team of judges will be relieved after each round of flying, but will also allow each contestant to be judged by each judge at least once. And if possible, he should have a qualified non-competitor fly a sample pattern of typical maneuvers immediately before the first contest flight, critiquing it as necessary so that the judges have a mental picture of what to look for.

Be especially careful about allowing your judges to fly in an event *they are judging*. This happened in a nearby contest last year, and though it did not affect my club's delegation of contestants, it was a serious mistake. If your judges want to fly, have them judge events other than those in which they wish to compete. And on that subject, note that the rule book allows for the CD to compete too, as long as a *qualified Contest Director has control of all aspects of the contest while the primary CD is flying*.

Parking: It's difficult to give much direction here, since almost every field will have a different parking setup. But we give our Parking Director, Dick Miller, another job which is definitely oriented toward our guests: we make up a single sheet of information to be handed out to EVERY non-flyer spectator who comes out. It begins with a welcome to our field and an invitation to become part of the action, to look over the static display area, ask questions of the pilots and club members, and particularly to enjoy our concessions stand and even join us at our Saturday night steak feed. The sheet goes on to answer the most frequently asked questions a spectator might have, such as "why is this called a 'scale' contest?" and "what are the pilots saying to the judges as they fly?" It ends with an invitation to come out to our field and try a buddy cord flight, and

usually produces at least a couple of takers. Three of this year's visitors have joined our club, and one, a retired gentleman, is almost ready to solo his *Hobbistar 60* as I write this. If you are interested in duplicating this sheet (with obvious alterations for your situation, of course), please send me a SASE and I'll be happy to forward one to you.

Registration. The "mood" at the registration table has more than you would think to do with getting your meet off to a happy start. You, the CD, should go over the registration forms in detail a day or so before, and make certain you understand which forms must be completed by which pilots. Since this article should remain valid for several years, we will not describe in detail how to fill out the various forms, because they may change a year or two from now. But they are relatively simple for the registrars to handle. Generally, each contestant will have to sign one form for each event he/she wants to enter, plus a safety declaration for AMA insurance purposes. Impress upon your registrars the importance of *checking each entrant's AMA (or MAAC) membership card* thoroughly, to be certain it is valid. If the contestant is *not* a current AMA member but wishes to fly, you are required to collect the appropriate fee and have the entrant complete the AMA membership form, which you will forward to AMA. In the unusual instance where the entrant says he simply forgot his card, the book requires him to pay the membership fee and complete the form, which will be forwarded to AMA. The fee will be returned when the AMA staff discovers he is already a member.

Arrange for some kind of identification badge to be issued at your registration desk. We had donated to us about fifty clear plastic name badge envelopes, such as you find at conventions. We made up a standard format insert on a computer, with the names of our own host club members already in place, and their function at the meet, such as "Carl Bond, Scorekeeper," "Doug Witten, Transmitter Impound," etc. These contest staff badges were of one color, judges' badges of another color, CD and Assistant CD a third color, and contestants still another color. The different colors made it easy for visitors to see at a glance whether you were a host club contest staff person or another contestant.

We find it easier to hand out the flight and static score sheets at the registration table, but you can do this at the scorekeeper's booth if you like. For each event, a contestant will get three flight score sheets (one for each judge; if you have two judges, then two score sheets, etc.) and (if it is a scale meet) one static score sheet. I will not reproduce these here; if you would like sample copies, an SASE will get them to you. Make sure, especially with the newer, or younger flyers, that they understand they have to fill out the maneuvers they propose to fly in the order they intend to fly them **on each of the three sheets** for that event. The flight sheets then go to the scorekeeper's desk until they are called to the flight line in preparation for their flights. The static score sheet, if applicable, is filled out with the model name and the contestant's name, given to the static judges, who score the model, initial the sheet, and give it back to the contestant, who then gives it back to the scorekeeper.

Scorekeeper: Your scorekeeper should be chosen from those who are reasonably good with a pocket calculator and show meticulous attention to detail. We locate him adjacent to the registration booth to provide easy access to contestants' names, models, and frequency info. This year we provided for him a new magnetic scoreboard, an idea we stole unabashedly from the Idaho Scale Squadron and the Boise Area Radio Kontrol Society (BARKS). It is nothing more than a four by five foot sheet of galvanized metal, painted white. There are thirty strips of 1/16" thick magnetized rubber with vertical lines to divide information and flight score columns on them, and six blank strips for event headings (see photo). Dry erase markers are used to enter pilots' names, channels, model info, and static and flight scores, with a final column for overall score. This arrangement is very easy to manage, since each contestant has a strip for each event entered, and the strips may be lifted and repositioned anywhere on the board. For example, if a flyer has a problem with a model and withdraws from that event, his/her strip is simply positioned vertically near the edge of the board and the remaining flyers in that event moved up in the same order. For the convenience of the scorekeeper, located next to our registration table, we also

have our registrars ask which frequency channel/s each entrant will use, and enter this information by the name on the event registration form. That allows the scorekeeper to design a flight order line-up so that the same frequency channel is not used twice in a row. (If it *is* up twice in a row, the second flyer cannot get his transmitter from the impound to prepare his model until the one before him is completely done, and this uses up valuable time.) Also, this alerts the registrars to anyone using the 50-MHz frequencies, so that they can request the contestant to show a valid amateur operating license. And a valid license can be any license class *except Novice*; i.e., it can be Technician, Technician Plus, General, Advanced, or Amateur Extra. If the contestant cannot produce a copy of his/her amateur license, the rule book says he/she may *not* compete using amateur frequencies until it is produced.

About contest registration fees: many clubs try to keep their fees as low as possible, preferring to make their profit at the concessions booth or on a raffle, if this is legal at their location. We charged \$10.00 for the first event and \$5.00 for each additional event this year, which essentially went to pay for our trophy and prize expenses. Other clubs charge a higher registration fee because they must pay rent for the contest site, or simply in the hope of making a larger profit. Be sure to put your fee schedule in any pre-meet publicity you generate, so that modelers may evaluate the relative expense of attending *your* contest versus perhaps another one that may be available about the same time.

Raffles and lotteries: If you intend to raffle off a new radio or model kit or other prize, check your local and state laws to be sure it is legal. Some states and even some city entities prohibit lotteries as "gambling," and you can get your club in deep trouble if you are found running an unlawful lottery.

Overnight Security: Our club is fortunate to have as one of its members Ron Tincher, the plant manager of the local Fleetwood Travel Trailer manufacturing plant, who makes available a demo travel trailer for a club representative to sleep in the night before the contest as well as Saturday night. (Perhaps I should explain that we do not allow on-field RV camping due to local land use ordinances.) This trailer is also handy for first aid use, trophy storage, and other incidental uses. If your club does allow on-site camping, I strongly recommend you station a club member at the field in an RV, if for nothing else than to welcome arrivals late Friday evening.

Now -- we have covered most of the preliminary information, and ninety per cent of our work has been done. It's now *CONTEST DAY!*

Encourage your staff to arrive at the field by 6:30 a.m. or earlier on contest morning. For sure, some modeler has driven three hundred miles yesterday and holed up in a motel room, intending to come out early, get his fifty-four piece triplane assembled, and get in some trim and engine adjustment flights before the pilots' meeting. *You need to accommodate these people!* They have put out much effort to patronize your contest, and may be totally unfamiliar with your field. You need to have somebody there who can unlock the field gate and help them get set up at a pit area. Immediately set out your frequency control system, and brief each arriving modeler on how your system works. As your staff arrives, (*you* are already there, right?!) you should facilitate setting up the registration desk and transmitter impound. You should require that transmitters be impounded at the time of registration, so that there is less chance of one's being turned on while another plane on that channel is in the air.

Begin announcing your pilots' briefing about thirty minutes before it is to take place. When it is time, gather the pilots around you and cordially welcome them to your field. Tell them your name and position and introduce your key staff to them, such as assistant CD, Chief Judge, flight and static judges, and Operations Manager. Now is the time to tell all your pilots any ground rules or special field rules. For example, our club does not allow *any* form of alcoholic beverages to be consumed on the premises, whether before, during or after flying. Explain the "foul line," and how it can affect a maneuver or entire flight. There will be questions you didn't think of, such as, "does

crossing the foul line on takeoff void the maneuver if *any* part of the plane crosses it, or does the *entire* plane have to cross it to zero out your takeoff?" Be ready to answer these questions, and if you haven't thought much about it and it seems to be an arbitrary call, ask your contestants how they would like the rule interpreted. Some may think this approach to be wishy-washy, but I call it flexibility, and it showed (at least in my case) that I was open-minded and willing to let those with more experience than I give some input. Keep the pilots' briefing as short as possible consistent with safety and efficiency, and then wish them well and get on with the flying.

Operations Manager: If there is a single key to keeping your pilots flying and thus happy, this person is it! His or her job is to **KEEP THE CONTEST MOVING!** Chuck Ince, our club secretary, did a superb job this year, by keeping at least three flyers lined up, ready to start their engines as soon as the previous flyer stopped his. He carried a stopwatch, and once "on the clock," a pilot has twelve minutes to complete his flight, including starting the engine and taxiing, if applicable. Your Operations Manager should be familiar with the rules concerning time limits, official attempts, touching the aircraft, etc. By keeping things moving, your contestants get to fly more rounds, and that, after all, is *why they came!* Since Chuck was stationed exactly on the "dead line," (which if crossed anytime in the flight zeros the entire flight) he was responsible for ruling on aircraft crossing it. Fortunately this year, none did. I also suggest that you do not allow pilots to arrive late and enter the flight portion of the contest without attending the pilots' brief. We had this happen my first year as a CD, and the contestant claimed he wasn't told about the "dead line." If you want to give latecomers a personal version of the pilots' briefing, that's up to you; we don't.

A suggestion here: if you are offering the "Fun Scale" event, call for the static judging of the fun scale models first, since it usually involves a simple "yes" or "no" (it does or does not get the 5-points for "scale") from the static judges, and the first round of flying can get underway immediately, while the more intricate judging of the sport scale models takes place.

If your club has a few youngsters in the 10 to 13 age bracket, recruit a couple of them to act as "runners," to carry score sheets from the judges back to the scorekeeper's table. Some clubs prefer to hold all scores from a round of flying until it is complete, the fear being that a pilot flying later in the round might somehow have an advantage in knowing his competitors' scores. We have never subscribed to that, and indeed, our pilots have all commended us on how quickly their scores are posted after a flight. You must choose your own philosophy, but unless someone squawks, I recommend posting scores as soon as they are available.

Don't overwork your judges and contest staff, but on the other hand, *keep the contest moving!* Your pilots came to *fly*, and long lunch breaks are not popular with them. Your food booth folks will be happier, too, if the lunch line trickles through the noon hour rather than bunching up during a long break. You will probably find that the first round takes just a bit longer than subsequent rounds; it takes "one time through" for all the officials and helpers to get into the rhythm of the meet. With no more than twenty-five contestants, you can get in two more rounds in the afternoon.

At the end of your first day's competitive flying, announce that the field is open for sport and general flying. It is almost a certainty that some of your guests will want to get some air time in without the pressure of judges watching them. If you have a really good flyer in your club, or someone with a very unusual aircraft -- "flying stop sign," "flying lawn mowers," etc., now might be a good time to let them put on a demonstration. Several contestants at our meet this year brought helicopters, and the spectators enjoyed them very much, since few had ever seen one of those little models fly. Our president, Russ Kilpatrick, drove the four miles to the airport, fired up his home-built BD-4, and made a few passes for us to take pictures. And I had the opportunity to fly a demo for the crowd with a beautiful, 1/3 scale Sopwith Pup, built by the local high school's senior aviation class. Bear in mind, however, that SAFETY NEVER ENDS, and if your "airshow" pilots begin taking chances and grandstanding, don't hesitate to ask them to fly further out from the crowd or do whatever it takes to keep the area safe.

If you've decided to put on a barbecue or spaghetti dinner or a steak feed as we do, your cooks should be doing their thing as the last round ends Saturday evening. Be sure to issue invitations to others present; if you have more food than it appears you will need, invite your spectators to join you, even though you may have cut off dinner reservations earlier in the day.

Consider having a well-known modeler in your area come and give a short talk to the pilots as the dinner ends. Two years ago, Dick Hansen, world-class modeler and flyer from Portland, Oregon, gave a little talk on "How to Get into Scale Modeling," and this year we had the one and only Jerry Nelson, who now lives in Hillsboro, speak to us on some of the many facets of modeling in his background. Jerry was either THE moving power or ONE of a few innovators who brought us the glider movement, pylon racing, the turnaround pattern event, giant scale and many other successful trends in modeling. If you can get someone with national credentials, it will make attendance at your meet more attractive.

Sunday morning you may need to have your static judges on hand again. Occasionally a modeler can't make it to the Saturday flying, but will drive over and show up Sunday morning. Be ready to process any of these, and crank them into the flying schedule. Hold another short pilots' briefing to make sure they get the ground rules. And here is where the flexibility of the magnetic scoreboard can come in very handy.

Sunday morning is also usually when the hottest races develop between contestants in a given event. This can be an exciting time, especially if you have someone get on the PA system and update the spectators and other pilots as the scores come in. Pilots and planes are tuned to a very fine degree now; they have become acclimated to your field and their concentration is more focused on flying. Take advantage of this, and let your visitors know about it!

You can probably get in two rounds Sunday by about noon or 1 o'clock if you start flying by 8 a.m. Unless all your contestants are from the local area, don't try to fly beyond then. Five rounds of flying is plenty for a two day contest with twenty-five contestants. Lunch will pretty well take care of itself during the latter part of the last round. Your CD should now be setting out your trophies and merchandise prizes for all to see. When the final round is complete, you should now CLOSE THE FIELD to all flying; you don't want engine and flight interference while you are awarding prizes. You can have your club president award the prizes or your CD can do it. As soon as the final scores are tabulated and available, call all pilots and spectators together and first thank them for making your meet successful, then award the prizes. If there are any really hot races, it's more suspenseful to award trophies beginning with third place, then second, then first. Don't forget to have one of your better club photographers ready with a camera; you'll want photos at least for your club newsletter and especially for your AMA District VP to use in his column. And you might even find that your local paper will print a shot or two, if they are well done.

We always have a nice selection of merchandise prizes in addition to our plaques and trophies. We have found the easiest way to handle the awarding of these is to divide them into the same number of groups as you have entries. After the trophies are given out, we simply draw names from a hat, and let each pilot come up as called and select a group of merchandise prizes. Since the merchandise prizes are a sort of "thank you" for entering, we allow a pilot entering two or more events to have his name drawn once for each event.

One way to encourage pilots to enter multiple events is to offer a "Grand Champion" trophy or merchandise prize. This would go to the flyer whose final total score for all events entered is the highest.

We have also offered a "consolation trophy" to the pilot who suffers the most spectacular crash during the meet. This is awarded at the discretion of the CD; if you are fortunate enough not to have had any major crashes, don't award it; just keep it for next year. This year, our "Most

Spectacular Crash" trophy (see photo) was won by our club newsletter editor, Mike Wood. Mike, in his first round of flying in his first ever contest, put his Great Planes "Easy Sport" into the dead center of the runway at full power and full speed. He was both embarrassed and terribly discouraged, but as an elementary school principal, he turned his own misfortune into a learning experience: he mounted his trophy, along with a few splinters of balsa from his plane, on the wall of his office, where, when his students see it, he can explain, "grownups make mistakes, too!"

When the prizes have been awarded, be sure to thank personally each one of your contestants. It is they, after all, who have made your weekend work entirely worth while.

As Contest Director, you have earned a day of rest. Take it, and then do not delay getting your Contest Director's Report in to the AMA. You have seven days for this, and it must be on time and accurate. Remember, if you have run a AA or higher meet, both your CD and Assistant CD (assuming the Assistant CD is a Contest Director) will be credited with running the meet, and both will be awarded free AMA membership for the following year, provided you are past the probationary period. This is AMA's way of saying "thank you" for helping to advance the sport of model aircraft by taking on the challenge of directing a contest.

We are at the end of a very long and complex article. The author hopes that this effort will result in more clubs and individual modelers taking on the challenge of becoming contest directors and then diving into the planning and execution of a significant contest. Please forgive me if I have held my own club up too often as an example, but the Grande Ronde Bush Pilots is a fine club, a club that was the very first in District 11 to be recognized as an "AMA Gold-Level Leader Club." I would be pleased to hear from any of you who might have comments or questions; if I have erred in my interpretation of the rule book, bring me to task. You may write me at 900 Main Avenue, La Grande, Oregon 97850, or e-mail me at gramhix@eoni.com

Cheers!

About the author: Graham Hicks is a retired naval officer, and modeler for over 50 years with 38 in radio control. He is a Contest Director and Leader Member of the AMA. His most recent articles appearing in Model Aviation were "Build a Converta-Cradle" (September '95) and "Liquids and Chemicals in the Workshop," (September '94).