

TO: SSA Rules Committee
FROM: Rick Sheppe, SSA 672645
DATE: March 6, 2006

PROPOSAL

I propose that the Modified Assigned Task be eliminated from the US Contest Rules.

DISCUSSION

On March 4, 2006 IGC voted to eliminate the STPS task (equivalent to our MAT) from the international contest rules. Their argument was this:

The Speed Tasks on Pilot Selected Turnpoints does not really make sense since the Speed Task-Assigned Areas fills similar purposes and is much more flexible.

(The "Speed Task-Assigned Areas" is equivalent to our Turn Area Task).

I would argue that we have the same reason (among others) to eliminate the MAT. The MAT was introduced as the last in a series of pilot-option tasks (PAD...POST...PST...MAT). They were all introduced to give pilots an opportunity to do some creative route planning back in the camera days. The Turn Area Task fulfills this purpose these days.

The other reasons include:

- o The MAT is the slowest task to score, despite improvements in the scoring program. Scoring the MAT, in a significant number of cases, involves the use of landing cards, manual analysis of flight logs, discussion with officials, and revised landing cards.
- o Although the pilots have a responsibility to understand the rules, they often do not, and misunderstanding of the MAT is a very common source of hard feelings at contests. I regularly see pilots agonizing over:
 - Landing out when they could have come home;
 - Flying to disallowed turnpoints;
 - Failing to claim the best set of turnpoints;
 - Failing to understand that out-and-return legs are illegal; and
 - Failing to understand that an out-and-return on the last 2 legs is legal (sometimes).

The last one is particularly insidious, since the situation can change from contest to contest, depending on Control Point attributes.

- o With the elimination of the STPS task, we no longer need to select US Team pilots based (in part) on their skills in pilot-selected-turnpoint tasks, and there is no longer a need for our pilots to practice such tasks.

The MAT is not without certain advantages. It is possible to call some very interesting and challenging Modified Assigned Tasks. In real life, however, interesting MATs are rarely called, and flying the task quite often degenerates into racing around tiny triangles near home. Giving up these "interesting" possibilities would not be a big loss, since we don't seem to make use of them anyway.

Why not keep the MAT, and let CDs choose not to use it? The answer is that it inhibits the evolution of our scoring program and discourages the development of new scoring software.

The MAT is not a bad task. It is just obsolete.