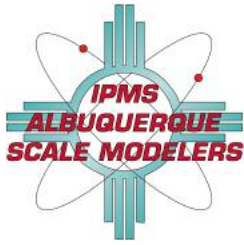


ALBUQUERQUE SCALE MODELERS



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August 2009

KIT REPORT KEN LIOTTA

P-400 Airacobra

Accurate Miniatures, 1/48 scale

Cactus Air Force at Guadalcanal issue, Kit No. 0407

In case you missed having a peek into this or the sister release by Accurate Miniatures of the Air Racer version boxes, this kit is a re-box of the Eduard kit. While the Eduard kit and this A-M kit share the same basic plastic parts, there are a few differences between the two.

What You Get

This issue includes the same 3 styrene trees, molded in grey this time, of the 127 pieces with finely engraved panel lines and details and one clear tree with 5 pieces. The clear

parts include separately molded "car doors" that can be glued open or closed. The kit also includes decal markings for three aircraft:

1. P-400 (BW-156) "Fancy Nancy" of the 347th FG, 67th FS out of Guadalcanal, Aug 1942
2. Airacobra I (AH-636) flown by Capt Ivan Gaidenko in Russia, Oct 1942
3. P-39M of the 345th FS, 350th FG in Algeria, April 1943

The kit does not include the lead weight/ballast for mounting in the nose (to keep the finished model on all three wheels without a pogo-like prop under the tail) that was included in the Eduard, both ProfiPACK and regular releases.

Color Diagram

This kit includes a multi-color paint scheme diagram sheet for the three aircraft markings outlined in four views (top, bottom, and both side profiles) of each. Unfortunately, it is not clear which of the five FS color references should be used



July meeting highlights, clockwise from below: Josh Pals runs a clinic; the business meeting in progress; members checking out the models before the meetings starts.





Best of Show winners from July, clockwise from above: Frank Randall's *Staghound Mk 1*, Sean Hayes's *Mustang*, Victor Maestas's *M20*, and Gregg Hayes's *Staghound*.

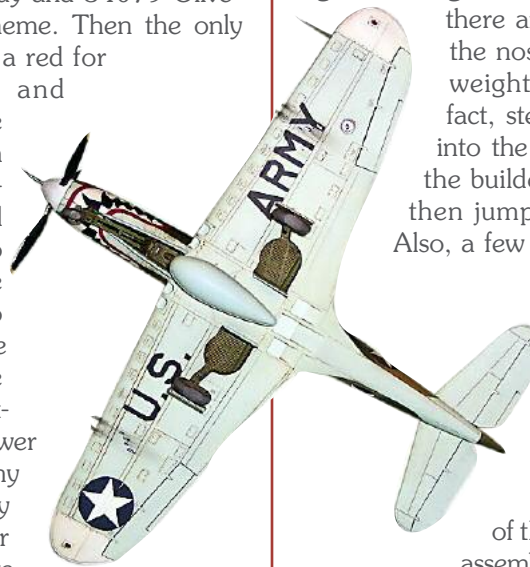
for which of the printed colors on the three different paint schemes. They list 36270 Medium Gray and 34079 Olive Drab, which fit the Russian paint scheme. Then the only other two camo colors listed (besides a red for the spinner) are 33531 Sand and 30266 Middle Stone. None of these four colors listed works for the Earth Brown on the P-400 or the Algerian P-39M. I'm not sure what the intended use of the Sand color was supposed to be, either. It may be possible that the Sand and Olive Drab were supposed to be used on the Algerian aircraft. The color sheet erroneously depicts the 347th FG aircraft as having been painted 36270 Medium Gray on the lower surfaces and makes no reference to any use of a Light Blue, Sky Blue, or Sky (depending on your belief of what color was actually applied) that would have been the color the lower surfaces received for the original British RAF Airacobras before the US commandeered them.

Instruction Sheet

The 16-page instructions include a brief aircraft development history, text that covers the differences between the various versions and their associated model parts, a numbered color coding chart for painting components, followed by ten steps with clear assembly diagrams and written assembly instructions. There are a few "holes" in the instructions



and I found myself repeatedly referring back to the Eduard instructions just to make sure I wasn't going goofy and missing something. For example, nowhere in the A-M sheet is there any mention of a need to add weight to the nose, like the nifty half round/wedge lead weight that you get in the Eduard sheet. In fact, step 2 has you glue the cockpit assembly into the right fuselage half, but then never tells the builder to glue the two halves together, and then jumps over to fuselage-to-wing assembly.



Also, a few of the decal numbers on the A-M sheet do not correspond with what is printed on the actual decal sheet. A little detective work was required to get them all placed correctly.

Also, the instructions lack clarity on which nose/gun top to use for which version and no mention is made of the pre-drilling and subsequent installation of the internal wing guns. They do include assembly notes for the underwing gun pods.

Part Options

As in the original Eduard release, you still get all of the options to build nearly every variant of the P-39 and P-400. You get the three different top nose caps (with and without gun ports, cuffed or non-cuffed), nose gun port/vents as separate pieces, the different gun tips for the spinner, three different types of prop blades (one set I believe are meant to be longer blades for the Air Racer issue), two different spinner assemblies (3-bladed and 4-bladed), accommodations for gunned and non-gunned wing leading edges, three different sets of (solid) exhaust stacks, two different nose wheels (different hubs), both weighted and non-weighted looking tires, an external fuel tank, a 1000-pound bomb, and auxiliary gun packs.

The cockpit compares quite nicely to interior photos and can stand up on its own without much more detailing or after market replacement. All three wheel wells are fully boxed in with moderate-to-excellent detail quality. Even though the kit includes a nice boxed-in baffle to go inside the air intake scoop, it does not include the horizontal splitter that can be easily seen in the middle. When I built mine, the only thing I added outside of what is included in the box was the noted

intake splitter and a set of Eduard photo-etched, pre-painted seat belts.

Assembly Notes

While the majority of the kit parts fit was straightforward and required nearly zero adjustment and/or excessive putty application, I did have one problem area that really didn't



rear its ugliness until it was too late. That was the upper wings-to-fuselage assembly. I mistakenly went the route of gluing each upper wing to their respective fuselage root *before* gluing them to the lower wing (all the while keeping an eye on alignment with the fuselage and the vertical tail). I have done this with other kits in the past, with relatively great success. I chose to do this on this kit because fellow modelers that had previously built the Eduard kit gave me a heads-up that they had been left with a significant gap between the wings and the fillets when they assembled the wings the traditional way (gluing the top and bottom wing halves together first, then attaching them to the fuselage sub-assembly).



So, as I bonded them, I got the alignment and uniformity of the wing placement from one side to the other correct and excellent wing-to-fillet joints, but what I lost was the correct upper wing dihedral when I pulled the tops down to bond to the lower half. Yikes. I pushed and pulled to no avail. On the flip side, while looking closely at the wings during this adventure, I noticed a significant dihedral look to the bottom of the wing. I figure that if I were to have pulled the upper wings up further, I would also have increased the lower wing dihedral and ultimately chose to leave it alone. Check the photos, you be the judge (by the way, Nats judges, just ignore all that you just read, in case I decide to enter this at Columbus. Nudge, nudge!).

This kit's clear parts were just as clear and crisply molded as the Eduard release. The main canopy seemed a little nar-

Year 2009 Contest Quick Reference Chart

Titles in **blue** indicate contests for "Modeler of the Year" Points

- 9 Jan** **SPECIAL CONTEST #1**
SCI-FI/SCIENCE/REAL SPACE/FANTASY
- 6 Feb** **ASM Swap Meet**—no contest.
- 6 Mar** **Open Contest**—Any kit/subject/scale.
- 3 Apr** **3 or More Engines**—any kit/subject/scale/era.
Sponsored Contest: Tank Destroyers of WWII (James Guld & John Tate)
- 1 May** **SPECIAL CONTEST #2**
THIRD WORLD—Army, Navy, Air Force, etc. No Warsaw Pact, no NATO.
Sponsored Contest: Battle of the Bulge (Fred Franceschi)
- 12 Jun** **Italiano**—Any kit/scale/subject/era built or operated in or from Italy.
Sponsored Contest: Show Your Stripes!—Best invasion-striped WWII D-Day aircraft (Don Smith)
- 10 Jul** **Armored Cars**—Any scale, era, manufacturer.
Sponsored Contest: "Best Panzer IV & Variants" (ASM E-Board)
- 7 Aug** **1/48 Single-engine Props**—Any kit/scale/subject/era
- 11 Sep** **Sharkmouths**—Plane, Tank, Car, Truck, etc. Any kit/subject/scale.
Sponsored Contest: "Best Hellcat F6F" (Frank Randall)
- 2 Oct** **SPECIAL CONTEST #3**
BEST COMPETITION RACER OR ATHLETE FIGURE)
Sponsored Contest: "Best Porsche" (Patrick Dick)
- 6 Nov** **Open Contest**—Any kit/subject/scale.
Sponsored Contest: "Best Vietnam Subject '64 - '75" (Tim Wood)
- 4 Dec** **SPECIAL CONTEST #4**
XYZ PROTOTYPES
Sponsored Contest: Best Mirage III, IV, V, 2000 or Variant (Rick Carver)
Plus *Model of the Year* competition!

row on the rear half when it was bonded to the fuselage, but gluing down one side before applying a little persuasion to the rear half while gluing the other side down seemed to correct that. All minor, but noteworthy.

Painting & Decals

Of the three cool paint schemes provided, I liked the well known "shark-mouthed" 347th Guadalcanal scheme the best. I figure these markings will look cool next to another P-400 built as the infamous "Hells Bell" of the same squadron. (that will follow later). When I applied the airbrush camouflage, I also tried another experiment. Lately, I have been trying out the "pre-shading" method of airbrushing a darker color than the camo colors along the panel lines prior to actual camo application, to provide a three-dimensional forced accent to

the paint scheme. Many times, modelers just use flat black. Because of the trickiness associated with having good aim while airbrushing the pre-shading, I thought that I would try to “brush” paint the pre-shade using a thinned-down flat black paint. While I am happy with the forced pre-shade look of the finished paint job, I am not as happy with the visibly stepped layer the pre-shade black left after the application of the camo colors. Even though I thinned the black down it still shows up. And also the application of Future floor polish prior to decal application and oil paint wash followed by the typical flat coat afterwards still didn’t level the step out completely. (Nats judges, please continue to disregard these details. Wink, wink).

The kit decals were applied over the noted Future coating using the standard Superscale Set and Sol system. I had a fair amount of time for positioning and corrections before the decals began to adhere and they were then gently blotted and pressed down onto the model. They laid down very well. While some other decals require several attempts at poking and coating with Sol to get them to completely lay down, these required only one pass.

Conclusion

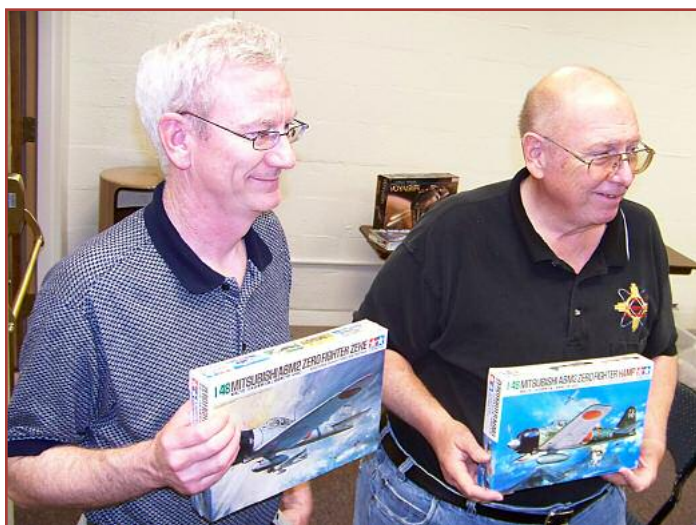
If it weren’t for the potential tail-heavy syndrome (and the lack of a preventative notation about it in the instructions), the goofy camo color recommendations, and a potential minor wing-to-fillet gap issue, I could confidently recommend this kit to modelers with minimum building experience. However, I think that any modeler with moderate building experience should have little problems with this kit and be able to garner several hours of building satisfaction. I think that this kit with an MSRP of \$26.99 to \$30.00 is a good value for the return enjoyment of the build. I wish to express

thanks to Accurate Miniatures for the opportunity to build and review this sample.

CHALLENGE BUILDS

BRIAN PECK

If you were at the last meeting, chances are you saw the two 1/48-scale Tamiya Zeros that Frank Randall and Jack Garriss built from the challenge build I issued two months ago. Their models came out very good and each of them had a good time doing it. Chalk up two more ASMerS that successfully completed the latest challenge build. Will you be next? You never know when the next challenge will be issued, so I hope to see everyone at the next meeting!



Master

Victor Maestas	1075
James Guld	895
Ken Liotta	491
Dave Miller	275
Brian Peck	252
Glenn Bingham	202
Mike Blohm	143
Keith Liotta	133
Mike McNichols	129
Don McBryde	25
Patrick Dick	6

Intermediate

Frank Randall	1074
Tony Humphries	990
Adrian Montañó	682
Rick Carver	520
Gil Johnson	485
Ken Piniak	325
Jack Garriss	185
Don Smith	147
Josh Pals	145
Tom Perea	6
Danny Williamson	4
Jeff Frickstad	2

Basic

Gregg Hayes	1320
Jeannie Garriss	360
Gordon Pegue	2

Junior

Sean Hayes	650
Chelsea Perea	325
Caroline Smith	275
Marie Smith	275

ASM 2009 MODELER-OF-THE-YEAR POINTS

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ASM members are encouraged to submit articles, reviews and other items as appropriate. Contact editor Joe Walters for details and specs. Submission deadline for each issue is the 20th of the preceding month.

BONUS PAGES!

Ken Liotta supplied several photos of the P-40 he reviewed; here are the rest of them.

