

The High Planes 1/48 Greenamyer Bearcats - Kit review

Anders Bruun

High Planes kits No. Race 4805 "Conquest I" and Race 4806 "American Jet". 1/48 kits, containing 34 injection-moulded plastic parts, metal landing gear legs and a vacformed canopy. Decals included. Produced by **High Planes Models, 127 Wheeler Street, Corryong, VIC 3707, Australia, phone: +61 260 761961, fax +61 260 761843, e-mail: hiplanes@corryong.albury.net.au (<http://corryong.albury.net.au/~hiplanes>)**

Darryl Greenamyer's planes have been described in BT#5, BT#13 and BT#16, so I will not repeat anything of the history of the plane, except to say that the kits enable you to build the 1969 world landplane speed record breaker, the 1969 Reno Champion or the 1975 "Bald Eagle" version. These are the first two kits in High Planes' eagerly awaited series of 1/48 kits. As they depict the same plane in two different paint schemes, the actual parts are the same - only the decals and painting instructions differ.

The kit

As usual with High Planes kits the instructions recommend you to start by cutting out the canopy and adjust the fuselage halves to fit it. The canopy is moulded together with the cockpit cover, and fits into a the cockpit opening. I am usually not so fond of this way of making the canopy, but with this plane it makes sense, especially if you want to build it opened. Anyway, the canopy appears to fit the fuselage spine well. This is also the natural time to sand the mating surfaces of the fuselage halves. The strakes below the rear fuselage will probably suffer from this, and if they are not well moulded it is probably a better idea to remove them altogether and restore them later.

Construction starts with the interior. It is pretty basic and those who like superdetailing and want to build the plane with the canopy and cockpit cover lifted off will probably need to do some extra work. The cockpit consists of a floor, two side consoles, a seat, an instrument panel and a stick. Everything will have to be cleaned up and fitted to the cockpit wall. I did it the easy way, since I planned to build it with the canopy closed. I just assembled the kit parts, painted them medium grey, did some "detailing by painting" and stuck them into one of the fuselage halves. I also attached the "engine", which is only a blanking plate with the front row of cylinders in half-relief and the streamline crankcase fairing. The engine moulding does not look impressive, but on the real plane it was almost completely invisible, so I don't it is worth complaining about. Make sure you make the blanking plate perpendicular to the fuselage, since the ledges to which it is attached are slightly asymmetric. I would not add the crankcase cover at this stage, since it will be better to be able to adjust its position later. Then the fuselage halves can be joined. You might want to cement the top half of the joint first, back to the tail wheel well, let dry, and then cement the bottom half, since the nose cowling might be

a bit asymmetric. The front opening is rough and uncircular, and appears to be slightly too large. I adjusted it with filler before joining the fuselage halves and sanded with rolled up paper after joining them. Then I cut a 2 mm wide strip of 0.5 mm plastic, rolled it around a pen to make it bend in a gentle curve, cut the length to the exact inner circumference of the opening, and glued it to the inner edge of the opening. After some more filling and sanding the opening was circular and slightly smaller. I then attached the crankcase cover, making sure it was central, parallel to the opening, and reached exactly to the opening.

The landing gear well inside the fuselage must be boxed in, otherwise you will be able to see straight through. The original hydraulic system was replaced on this plane, so it was unique among Bearcats in that the inner landing gear doors were often closed when it was parked. This means that the boxing can be made in a simple way after joining the fuselage halves, since little of it will be seen. The opening is rectangular, so I slipped in a strip of 0.5 mm plastic card that was wide enough to cover the horizontal roof part, and glued it at the sides and cut off the surplus. Then I covered the front and rear vertical walls in a similar way, before adding a vertical wall on the centreline to make sure that no light can be seen through the fuselage.

The wings are next. Before joining the halves some material has to be removed from the top of the landing gear wells and from the inside of the top wings. There are no locating pins to help when joining the wing halves and neither the tips or the roots give much guidance. I found it best to line the trailing edges up at the inner ends of the ailerons. Some filling and sanding will be necessary to create the concave shape of the tips. This is easier if the tips of the bottom halves are shortened slightly at the rear before joining the halves. The air inlets at the roots must be filled, as on the original. The reason for leaving them on the kit is probably to be found on one of the sprues, which, apart from the redundant wheel well ducts for the inlets, contains a set of Rare Bear wing tips. Something to look forward to, all you Bear fans!

The fit between the wings and the fuselage is not so good, and will need some filler, but don't bother about the parts to the rear of the spars on the top of the wings - they will be covered by the root fairings. It is important to go slowly and carefully when fitting the fairings. They must be sanded to a thin point at the front and follow the wing and fuselage contours. My advise is to disregard the bottom surfaces aft of the trailing edge while doing this - they will need a bit of filler anyway, because the fairings do not fit the wing trailing edges. Then come the stabilisers - they are fitted into recesses in the fuselage in the familiar High Planes way. Again, some fitting, filling and sanding will be necessary.

The plastic wheels, landing gear doors and tail gear parts need some cleaning up. The metal main gear legs look very good. They should be fitted immediately outboard of the lowered part of the wells, and a retraction rod must be added at the rear side of the legs. The fit is sloppy, but there is plenty of contact surface to put a drop of epoxy in. The two-part spinner and the separate propeller blades look good.

Generally, the shape of the kits looks good, but I have a couple of remarks: The bulges over the leading edge intakes look too pronounced, and I think they should be filed down a little. The final 1975 version had a flat underside to the tail cone (see figure). After the qualifying heat at Mojave (or Reno, depending on who you ask...) the tail wheel collapsed when landing. The resulting damage was quickly covered up with sheet metal and has remained that way ever since... The kit tail cone looks like a compromise between the undamaged and the damaged versions - the bottom line of the 1969 version had a constant-radius curve - see Dave Jones' drawings in earlier BTs. As pointed out in BT#16, the 1969 Reno version should have exhaust shrouds and a stainless steel panel aft of the exhausts.

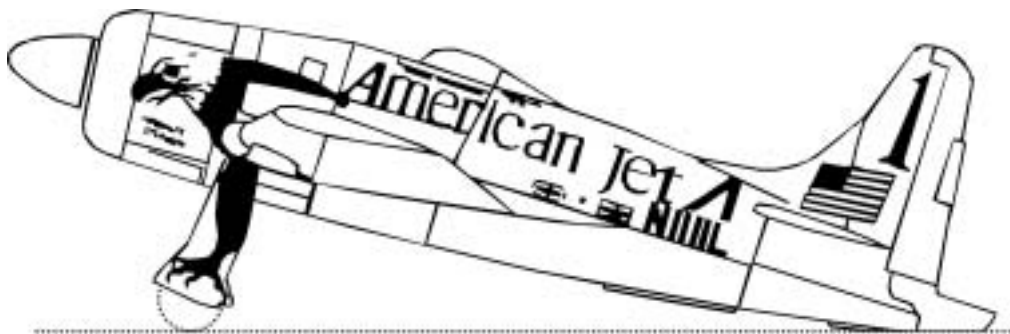
The instruction sheets are of the familiar standard - a simple but adequate A4 sheet containing an exploded

assembly diagram and decal placement drawings. The decal sheets are very good - almost complete, well-printed (by Fantasy Printshop) and the colours are, as far as I can tell, correct. I am told that the 1969 version never carried the full set of sponsor decals on the right side of the rear fuselage, but only the ones carried on the record-breaker - however, I'm not sure of this and I would like to see photographic evidence. The decal sheet gives two different "NAT'L CHAMP ..." lists for the 1969 version - the blue ones are correct and should replace the red ones. For notes on the 1975 version, see the review below!

Conclusion

Although numbered 4805 and 4806, these are High Planes' first 1/48 kits. I wondered a bit how they would manage to produce the bigger 1/48 kits - some short-run companies get problems with sink marks and bad mould filling when moulding bigger parts. However, most things look very familiar from the 1/72 kits - the same strengths (shapes, surface detail, decals) and the same weaknesses (flash, fit). The recommendation is the same - great kits, but not for those who are afraid of dry-fitting, filling and sanding !

A big thanks to High Planes for the review examples!



The 1975 Reno "tail modification"...

The High Planes 1/72 "American Jet" - Kit review

Anders Bruun

High Planes Kit No. Race 72017 "American Jet". 1/72 injection-moulded kit, containing 27 styrene parts, metal landing gear legs, a vacformed canopy, decals and a two-page instruction sheet.

I reviewed the 1969 version of this plane in BT#16. All the plastic parts of this kit are the same, so in this review I will only focus on things that are specific to the 1975 version.

In 1975 the plane, which had been mothballed after Greenamyers' conflicts with the federal rulemakers and the Reno management in 1971 and 1972, was taken out of storage.

The plane flew in two races that year, at Mojave in June and at Reno in September. At Mojave it qualified in first

place at 418 mph and finished third in the final at 411 mph, after problems when the tailwheel dropped down and slowed the plane. At Reno Greenamyers qualified first again, at a record-breaking 435.556 mph, but the propeller governor failed before the start of the championship race, so he never got off the ground. After the 1975 season the plane was finally retired and donated to the National Air & Space Museum, where it remains stored today.

The colourful (seven colours) and well-printed (by Fantasy Printshop) decal sheet contains almost all markings for the dramatic yellow eagle-decorated machine. The only thing missing is the fine-print crew lists on the inner landing gear doors. I have never seen the complete text of those lists, though - if you know the details, please let me know!

The kit instructions give two alternative sponsor decal placements for the 1975 version. The drawing of the right side might well have been correct at some time, but at Reno the decal placement on the right side of the fuselage was as in the separate sketch below the actual drawing in the kit instruction.

The crankcase cover of the 1975 version should be yellow. The final version had a flat, angular bottom of the rear end of the fuselage after a landing mishap at Reno - see the figure above! The plane should also have a small whip aerial on the rear fuselage and a pitot tube in the standard Bearcat position below the left wing. ...and if you need a diorama idea, check some photos from the 1975 Reno races, where Greenamyer, in a

white Stetson, used a pair of oxen for moving the plane around the ramp!

References

- <http://www.warbirdaeropress.com/conquestpages/conquest1gallery.html>
- **Reed Kinert: "Racing Planes and Air Races, Volume XII"** (Aero Publishers Inc., 1976)
- **John Tegler: "Gentlemen, You Have A Race"** (Wings Publishing Co., 1984)
- http://www.aviation-history.com/garber/vg-bldg/grumman_F8F-1_f.html

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