

High Planes' 1/72 "Rare Bear" Kits – Review

Anders Bruun

High Planes kits No. **Race 72014 "Rare Bear"** and **Race 72022 "Rare Bear 1985"**. Each kit contains 27 injection-moulded parts, metal landing gear legs, resin wing tips, two vacformed canopies (one as a spare) and complete decals.



The kits differ in one of the two sprues, containing the fuselage and propeller. The other sprue is identical to one of the sprues of the "Smirnoff", "Conquest One" and "American Jet" kits. The 1985 version correctly depicts the modified original cowling with bumps over some of the front row cylinders. It has a one-piece four-blade propeller which is intended to fit between front and rear parts of the spinner. This kit also includes the cowling scoop for the 1977 "Spirit of 77" version. There are no decals for this version, however, so perhaps there will be a future kit of that unique and short-lived version... The "undated" kit depicts the 1999 version, with the later cowling. It has the massive three-blade propeller in the form of separate blades that should be fitted to the one-piece spinner. The decal sheets are complete and include all the trim for the two planes - purple fuselage flash and wing band for the 1985 version and the complete gold trim for the 1999 version, including the wrap-around nose trim, which has to "wall-papered" on to the fuselage.

The wings are top and bottom full-span halves, with separate resin wing tips that should be fitted on the kit's "Conquest I"-style tips. The tips don't fit well at all and will need a lot of filler - perhaps it is easier to scratch-build them. Quite a lot of material has to be removed from the inside of the wing halves to make room for the landing gear wells, which are reasonably deep and detailed and moulded in the bottom wing half. The oil cooler and induction air ducts are supplied as separate parts the have to be fitted inside the wheel wells, requiring quite a bit of trimming and thinning. The wing root inlets are not very sharply moulded and will need refining. On one of my kits the aileron tabs were short-moulded and need repair or replacement.

The cockpit comprises side panels, seat and instrument panel, which are intended to be fixed on the floor on top of the wing. These parts are simple, but should be adequate if you don't plan to build the model with the canopy opened. However, they don't fit very well. The

fuselage halves are slipped over the wings, trapping them and enclosing the cockpit. Again a lot of trimming is needed, but if this is done carefully I don't think a lot of filler will be required. The tail gear well and the engine bulkhead also need attention before joining the fuselage halves. No engine as such is provided, but it is completely invisible on the real plane anyway. The cowling opening is not cleanly shaped and needs refining. The propeller treatment differs between the two kits - on the '85 version the complete propeller should be fitted between a two-part spinner and in the '99 version the three blades are separate and should be butt-joined to a one-piece spinner. In both versions they look perfectly adequate, but will need cleaning up and some careful fitting. The stabilisers are thin and well-moulded and fit into recesses in the rear fuselage. The canopy is vacformed, and very clear and clean. In the usual High Planes manner the fixed front part of it should be fitted in a recess in the fuselage. This will require some very careful fitting and filling and sanding. The fuselage sides will need trimming in order to fit the rear part of the canopy - do this before attaching the canopy, otherwise you will be in for some risky filling and sanding afterwards.

The metal main gear legs look good, but they lack a couple of struts at the top and it is not too clear where they should fit - consult your references! The wheels are moulded in two halves and look perfectly adequate. The main landing gear doors are reasonably thin and look good, but they don't have any locating pins. The inner landing gear doors will need some fitting.



The decal sheets are impressive, printed in full colour and complete with all markings. The belly stripe for the '99 version is not correct, it should not be solid but broken up into several parts. However, it looks like this could relatively easily be done by cutting the decal in parts. The wrap-around trim for the nose of the '99 version looks interesting - I have a model in the works which should really have been finished in time for this issue... However, I will come back in the next issue and give a full report of my experiences. The decals for the '85 version look simply perfect, beautifully printed, accurate (the markings were really that asymmetric!) and printed in all the correct colours.

The shape of both kits looks very good. The '85 version has all the little bulges for cylinder head clearance and the '99 version has the correct widened cowling. As for references, look out for **Taichiro Yamashita's** superb

drawings of the '99 version and **Bret Donaldson's** drawings of the '85 version. The www.WarbirdAeroPress.com website has lots of good photos.

High Planes' 1/72 "Critical Mass" 1999-2000 – Kit review

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High Planes kits No. **Race 018 "Critical Mass - 99-2000"**. Contains 24 injection-moulded parts, 8 metal parts, two vacformed canopies (one as a spare) and complete decals.



This kit of course has many parts in common with kit No. Race 002, which depicts the 1997 version of the plane. Since I have built my example of that kit I can't compare the parts, but it seems the fuselage halves, upper wing halves and canopy have been modified. Assembly starts with the interior, which comprises floor and consoles, seat, a rear bulkhead and an instrument panel in plastic plus a metal stick. It is pretty basic, but can be painted and detailed to taste. The fit of the assembled interior in the fuselage halves is very uncertain, so I recommend cutting off the location pegs in the fuselage and cementing everything where it looks good. There is no engine, since it wouldn't be visible anyway through the very narrow opening behind the spinner, but there is a blanking plate which includes the fairing behind the spinner. This is too short, as the kit instructions point out. The instructions recommend that you extend the fairing using the centre sprue of the kit, but it is probably just as easy to cut down the edge of the blanking plate and fit it further forward in the cowling. The fuselage fits well after sanding the mating surfaces.

The vacformed canopy is clear and cleanly moulded, but does not fit the recess in the turtledeck. The recess is much too short and must be extended to the rear - or cut away altogether. The kit instruction sideviews are correct. If I remember correctly this area of the kit looks like an improvement over the awkward '97 version, but it will still not be easy to fit.

The wings need a bit of cleaning up, but only a little thinning of the trailing edges. I suggest closing the wing root inlets and drilling new openings of correct shape - the kit instructions depict the pre-1994 version of the inlets. The inlet openings should be around 2 x 5.5 mm and have rounded ends rounded ends. They do not extend all the way out to the fences or in to the fuselage.

The wings have a full-span bottom half and separate top halves. I would suggest fitting the one-piece bottom half of the wing temporarily to the fuselage and then fitting the inner edges of the top wing panels until they fit well against the fuselage, and then joining the top and the bottom halves after breaking away the bottom half from the fuselage. The joint between the rear edge of the bottom half and the fuselage needed a bit of filler.

The fences at the edges of the oil coolers can be made sawing vertical slits along the edges of the intakes from the leading edge rearwards, all through both the bottom and the top half of the wings at the outboard ends of the intakes, and through the bottom halves at the inboard ends. Thin plastic card can then be fitted in the slits and cut down to size. Another alternative, which has the advantage of giving a good metal finish, is to use aluminium from a beer can. Note that the inner fences were also modified in 1994. They should be much smaller than the outer ones, and really only visible at the leading edge as a narrow unpainted strip of metal.

The landing gear wells are a little bit simplified, but they are reasonably deep. The landing gear legs and doors look good, but the details of the wheels are perhaps a bit soft. The smaller of the two tail wheels should be used. The propeller is moulded together with the spinner, which means the blade roots have to be cleaned up. I thought the propeller would sit too close to the cowling, so I added a 0.5 mm plastic card disc to the rear of the spinner. There should be a small aerial below the fuselage, on the fuselage centreline just aft of the leading edge of the flaps.

The decal sheet looks very good, well printed and thin, but there are some question marks. I wonder about the correctness of the instructions - I don't think the plane carried the "nothing ordinary about it" texts on the rear fuselage in '99-'00. Sponsor decals come and go, but I'm pretty sure the VP and Champion logos should be placed below the fuselage trim, rather than above as indicated in the instructions. I believe the sponsor decals are complete for the '99 version, but in '00 the plane carried extra Champion decals on the oil cooler endplates and big rectangular white decals (I haven't found out which) below the windscreen. The fuselage trim is duplicated, which is nice since some touch-up might be necessary. You also get no less than eight "Tasmanian Devil" cowling logos! For the parts of the fuselage trim in front of the exhaust outlets only the white edges are supplied. The curved white trim for the cowling is not complete - only half of it is provided on the sheet. My kit included two decal sheets, which I guess might be in order to compensate for this. The white separation line below the wings should continue straight across the belly of the plane and not end where the black leading edge ends, as shown in the instructions.

I would suggest dry-fitting the decals, or perhaps making copies of them for dry-fitting, before committing them to water. There is a lot of double curvature around the leading edges and the cowling and dry-fitting the decals will also make it easier to make masks for painting the black parts.

The shape of the kit looks mainly right. It is difficult to tell from photos, but the wing/fuselage fairing is perhaps too big and should be more concave. There should also be some more panel lines in that area - see the sketch. If you only want to build one "Critical Mass" you should choose this kit over the '97 version, since the canopy

although still a bit troublesome is improved and the wing/fuselage joints and cowling will be much easier due to the modifications of the real plane. If all kits do indeed include two decal sheets you will also get some spares and extra bits for touch-up.

References

Taichiro Yamashita has made superb drawings of the 2001 version, which differed in some sponsor markings, but which I think was structurally identical to the 99'-00' versions.