

## The High Planes 1/72 "Miss Ashley II" – Kit review

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**High Planes** kit No. Racer 72005 "**Miss Ashley II**". Contains 21 injection-moulded parts, six resin parts, metal landing gear legs, two vacformed canopies (one as a spare) and complete decals.

The kit allows construction of either of two versions, the 1998 version with "Courtaulds Aerospace" sponsorship and the ex #69 "Georgia Mae" radiator scoop and the 1999 version, after the "sex change operation", with "Desothane HS" sponsorship and the unique NACA radiator scoop. The latter is of course the version in which **Gary Levitz** so tragically crashed to his death during the 1999 Reno races.



Construction starts with the interior, which comprises four parts, floor and instrument panel in styrene and seat and stick in sharp, good resin. There is no sidewall detail, so you will have to improvise there. At the same time the radiator outlet and the NACA carburettor inlet have to be boxed in. The kit provides a ramp for the carburettor inlet, but it is way too big and perhaps intended for the 1999 radiator inlet? This is also the time to clean up the exhaust openings and attach the resin exhausts. These are a big improvement over the plastic ones usually found in High Planes kits. The tail wheel, which is also a very nice resin part, also needs some attachment hardware at this stage. As usual there is some flash to remove and some pretty heavy moulding gates, but once these are removed the fit is good.

If you plan to make the 1999 NACA radiator scoop version you need to start thinking about it before joining the fuselage halves. The front of the fairing is provided as a separate part, to be fitted instead of the scoop inlet. However, High Planes have made no effort to reproduce the ramp and the opening of the scoop, neither on the fairing part nor on the fuselage halves. Since the ramp extends 6-7 mm back into the fuselage halves quite a bit of material must be removed. I don't have any quick, easy solution to this, some precision sawing and filing is needed, and I don't think there is material enough, so at least the parts of the scoop that extends into the fuselage halves need to be boxed in. I would probably build the intake ramp and its sidewalls as a separate part with sidewalls high enough to extend outside of the fairing and fuselage. I would remove much of the kit parts in this area, forming an opening into which ramp and sidewall could be fitted and then fill and trim down

the sidewalls. The fairing part is too wide at the front and should be narrowed down. The outline of the ramp is scribed into the fairing part, but beware, it is much too wide where the fairing part meets the fuselage - look at the kit instruction drawings instead. Reference to photos and/or drawings is vital in order to get this area right!

If you build the earlier (but less exciting...) version with the more normal scoop things will be easier. The kit includes a nice, sharp resin inlet, which takes care of one of the usual short-run P-51 problems.

The wing consists of a full-span lower half and separate top panels. It lacks some little fairings and trim tab linkages, but nothing major. It has reasonably thin trailing edges, but will stand some thinning. The wheel wells are moulded integral with the bottom half and have to have their tops severely trimmed down - I actually don't think there will be room for them at all. There is no internal detail, so nothing will be lost if you remove them. The inner landing gear doors are moulded shut, which is correct - I don't think I have ever seen them open in a photo. However, you might want to box in that area and thin down the edge of the inner gear doors. The landing gear legs look good, but need some cleanup, and you have to add the retraction links yourself. The wheels are adequate and the gear doors, which lack internal detail, are thin.

The contra-rotating propellers and the spinner will need quite a bit of cleanup, but nothing impossible. It's good that the propeller blades were black on the real plane, since natural metal makes it more difficult to hide little imperfections. The spinner, however, should be natural metal... Who will be first to produce turned, polished aluminium spinners for race planes? This would be a great product - the armour builders can buy turned gun barrels, why can't we have spinners?

Some little bits and pieces need to be added before finishing. A small L-shaped pitot should be fitted the right wing, midway between the leading edge and the aileron hinge line at the inboard end of the aileron. Some other little fairings and other details are missing, but can easily be added with reference to the Yamashita drawings.

The multi-colour decals are very good - thin, well-printed and complete. Hopefully the white ink is solid enough to cover the red paint. The only errors I could find was that the rectangle below the Courtaulds logo should be red, not orange, and the word "International" below "PRC-DeSoto" should be gold, not orange. The tail race numbers are given in two versions, one in solid red and one in red-toning-to-blue, not very successfully trying to simulate the colour-shift effect on the original. The black-gold-black pinstripe will nicely separate the red and white paint on the fuselage. Note that the black anti-glare panel was added during the 1999 races! The interior is mainly light grey, including the instrument panel. The floor looks like

I mention the canopy last, even though the instructions recommend starting with fitting the fuselage to the canopy. This is always good advice, even with injection-moulded canopies, since it is a lot easier to adjust the fuselage split than to adjust the width of a canopy. The vacformed canopies are clear and well shaped. As usual with High Planes kits the canopy mouldings include a bit of the surrounding fuselage, which you might or might not like.

As is obvious from its low kit number this kit was announced a long time ago. I think it has certainly been worth the wait! The shape looks right - compared to **Taichiro Yamashita's** drawings the leading edge sweep is a bit more pronounced and the tip chord a bit shorter. Judging from photos I think the kit is more correct (the team's own promotion material and the drawings in "**Griffon-Powered Mustangs**" show an even more pronounced sweep!) but the leading edge sweep angle might have changed when the carbon-fibre leading edges was added in 1998. The surface detail is generally good, but my example had some blemishes around the right exhausts, which almost looked like mould damage.

The 1999 version will require some extra work and thinking, but otherwise there will only be the "normal" High Planes cleaning-up and fitting.

#### *References*

- Drawings by **Taichiro Yamashita**
- **A. Kevin Grantham and Nicholas H. Veronico: "Griffon-Powered Mustangs"** (Raceplane Tech Series Volume 1, Specialty Press, 2000.

There's quite a lot of "Miss Ashley II" material on the web, for example:

- [http://www.warbirdaeropress.com/Photo Gallery Pages/MA2 Gallery.htm](http://www.warbirdaeropress.com/Photo%20Gallery/Pages/MA2%20Gallery.htm)
- <http://aafo.com/racing/people/brogers.htm>
- <http://aafo.com/racing/news/98/06-10-98.htm>
- <http://aafo.com/racing/news/99/03-27-99.htm>
- <http://aafo.com/gallery/1999/slideshow/ssma201.htm>
- <http://aafo.com/racing/news/99/07-27-99.htm>

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