Creswell RC Flyers

Warbird Primer

By Khoi Tran

Part I: Aircraft selection.

Pre-requisite: Intermediate flyer looking to add prop-driven warbird(s) to his hangar.

First warbird preferences:

--Reasonable size: 120 class minimum (avoid the smaller 40-60 size). 72" WS is the norm here, allowing good ground handling and flight envelope esp in cross winds. Also, more engine options incl gasoline vs traditional nitro.

--Reasonable wing loading: 12-16 lbs for 120 class warbird. 22-25 lbs for 50cc class.

--Good design: ideal first airframes are P-47, P-51, Zero, FW-190. Avoid aircrafts with reputation of bad behaviors like Corsair, or those with rotating retracts like P-40, F6, A-1, F4 or those with narrow stance like ME 109, Spitfires. The first warbird should have broad flight envelope, easy ground handling with big rudder and wide stance 85-90 degrees gears. TopFlite GS P-47 and P-51, World Models GS Zero are first choices. Topflite GS P-40 is second choice. Second shelf options are CMP offerings in 120 class that are solid fliers, but require mods in retract and engine compartments.

--Availability of well-built retracts: A large amount of time will be spent fussing with retracts both during assembly and at the field initially. It may take several flights until all the retract bugs are worked out, and will cont to be area of concern going forward. Check on the web if the bird you're looking for has retract issues and solutions in place before you buy. As a general rule, Sierra and Robart air systems are solid. CJM are hit and miss, depending on the model. Spring Air systems are light duty. KMP is so so. Avoid mechanical retracts. Electric systems are not ready for prime time yet for big birds.

--Availability of well-built engines: 120 class airframe allows option to use 4C nitro like Saito 180 or YS140, or gasoline offering like DLE 30. Going bigger to GS size allows use of the popular DLE 55 gasoline. Bigger engines are more reliable, maintenance free, esp hold true for gasoline and 4C nitro. Radial cowl airframes will allow the most flexibility in engine size and configurations, like the P-47, Zero, FW 190, F6, F4.

--Appropriate budgeting: 120 class offerings from CMP/Nitroplanes run around $160-200. GS offering from Topflite and WM run $450-750. Engines for both classes run $350-650. Retracts for 120 class are about $200-300 and 50cc class are about $350-400. All together expect to spend about $1000 for 120 class and $2000 for 50cc class. Don't skimp on retracts. Buying the good stuff will save you hours of frustration at home and at the field. Don't skimp on engines if you are not used to bringing warbirds home on deadstick!!!