

F2D News - December 2005

Mark Rudner
rudner@mit.edu

Another year has gone by, and as the new year approaches many of our thoughts are starting to turn toward next season and the things that will make it even better than the one that has just passed. Before getting ahead of ourselves, though, let's make sure that we close out this season properly and in style.

I know that for me, after returning from my last competition of the year (Red Flag in Phoenix), there were so many other things to take care of that I more or less dropped all of my equipment in the corner and left it there for a few weeks until finally conjuring up the time and energy to put everything away properly. If this were an affliction all of my own, I'd have no reason to write about it here. Knowing how busy we all are, however, I have a strong suspicion that this is a pretty common situation. Things that were put off during the combat season now need to get done, and in some cases this may be a pretty long list of chores. In the course of catching up on these other tasks, it's important not to forget about your equipment and to make sure that it's properly stored for the winter.

After wiping off any greasy slime remaining on your wings, take some time to clean and inspect your engines. If there was a lot of moisture in the air the last time you flew, it is especially important to clean them out and to oil them well in order to prevent rust. I'm not sure if I have mentioned this before, but it is a good idea at the end of any flying session to burn out any residual fuel left in the case by "barking" the engine. By "barking" the engine, I mean that you should disconnect the fuel line (make sure the bladder is empty before doing this), then connect the battery and flick the propeller just as if you were trying to start the engine. Do this until it fires for a few seconds and it is clear that the case is completely dry. When left for a long time, the ingredients in the fuel can undergo chemical reactions that turn them into much nastier chemicals that can do harm to your engine.

It's also important to make sure that your bearings are clean and in good shape for the new year. The most thorough way to check this is by disassembling the engine. Once the piston and liner are removed (along with the head and back plate), you can lightly spin the crankshaft with your fingers and feel if there are any "ticks" in the bearings or if there is any sort of gritty feeling. If something doesn't feel smooth, you should try to clean both the front and main bearings as thoroughly as possible. If this still doesn't solve the problem, then it's time to replace one or both of them. After either cleaning or replacing the bearings, load them up with plenty of oil (I use 3-in-1 oil, though any similar product should be fine) and reassemble the engine coating all parts with a liberal amount of oil. By following this procedure, the life of your engines will be prolonged and they will be all ready to go as soon as the first nice day hits.

As I wrap up this last column of the year, I'd just like to say that I think we had a great year for F2D in New England. We finished the year with a lot of enthusiasm and momentum that should carry us right through the winter. It's been great seeing the amount of progress in everyone's flying.

For those of you who haven't given it a shot yet, I encourage you to think seriously about trying this event next year. As anyone who has flown F2D will tell you, this event is a lot of fun. To any combat pilot who is considering adding this event to his/her schedule, I extend an open offer to let you try out one of my F2D models at any of the competitions or an agreed upon practice day. What's the worst that could happen... you might like it.

Happy New Year, and Good Luck in 2006!