



P-47B Thunderbolt

The Editor tries out Alfa Model's 'Razorback'

Alfa Model's World War 2 scale series has been around for some time now and still continues to offer the modeller something a little bit different. These models are moulded from extruded Polystyrene foam with a tougher surface layer and the vulnerable parts are reinforced with additional plastic mouldings. They are extremely light and offer a high

strength-to-weight ratio. Depending upon the power systems employed, flying characteristics vary from park-flyer to fully aerobatic. The subject of this review is the P-47D Thunderbolt, which Alfa have modelled in the 'Razorback' version. This is somewhat unusual as most modelled 'D's tend to be the numerically superior bubble canopy versions, the P-47D-25-RE onwards, which

overcame rearward visibility difficulties by employing the bubble canopy from the British Hawker Typhoon.

First Impressions

As usual, for Alfa, the large box contains a fuselage assembly, the wing, a small pack of hardware 'bits', a waterslide decal sheet, a 3D assembly drawing and a four-page A4 pamphlet. The box can be used for transporting the model to the field, but I can't see many of us using it as the Thunderbolt only spans 830 mm and will easily drop into the boot of most cars fully assembled. The finish and detail on the airframe components are first class with all panel lines lightly moulded in. All control linkages for elevator and ailerons are prefitted. There is a choice of power systems at extra cost, and our model came with the brushed 300 geared motor pack which also included a speed controller and a complete prop assembly with adapter. This retails at £44.95 and added to the price of £89.95 of the basic kit makes a very effective and good value package without going the brushless route.

Assembly

This model is light and the surfaces delicate and care is needed to avoid dents and 'dings' during assembly.



A high degree of pre-fabrication means not many parts in the box





The power train



The large drawing clearly shows where everything goes



A servo slot needs to be cut into the lower wing panel



The aileron servo in place – a couple of dabs of hot glue do the trick



The motor/gearbox mounting

The canopy needs to be removed to get to the fuselage internals. There are instructions for doing this but such is the closeness of fit, it's a fiddly job and I found a pair of tweezers indispensable for lifting the top edge. A pair of dowels locate the rear of the canopy into the fuselage. These, too, are a very close fit and replacing the canopy was made much easier by rounding off the ends of the dowels with a file. At this point, I chose to make up and paint the pilot figure from the plastic mouldings supplied. I cut an aperture in the cockpit floor to allow the pilot's head and shoulders to pass through and glued the pilot to a card base, which in turn was glued under the cockpit floor.

A single micro servo, of your own choice, controls the ailerons and a slot needs to be cut to suit in the wing. Connecting up is easy using Alfa's supplied swivel connector.

The cowling on the front fuselage is removed. Three small screws hold the motor/gearbox assembly in place on the fuselage front bulkhead. The hole positions are clearly marked and can be drilled through

using a fine drill. A drop of thin cyano in each hole gives a better grip to the screws. The motor/ gearbox and trailing speed controller and leads are fed down through the fuselage and the motor screwed in place. The cowling is then replaced and I used four tiny pieces of Blue-Tack to secure it to the fuselage. The prop assembly is now fitted.

The aileron servo lead can then be fed up into the fuselage and the wing bolted in place. Again, the wing/fuselage fit is superb.

The elevator servo is screwed into position on the starboard side of the fuselage mounting tray. An aperture is pre-cut for this and can be modified to suit choice of servo. The swivel connector provided makes adjustment extremely simple. Unfortunately, the elevator control snake has far too much play in it for precise operation and this was cured by pushing a piece of light foam down the fuselage, slotted to envelope the snake. The foam was glued into place but make sure you use a foam-friendly glue if you use this method!



Decals are tricky to fit but look good. They are, however, too transparent



The cockpit section. The pilot is made up from mouldings supplied and inserted from underneath



The dowel ends were rounded off to help the cockpit cover slide into place

Decals

The decals are waterslide transfers and took me right back to my plastic modeling youth! They are extremely light, but, on the downside, they are very flimsy and a little transparent, allowing the black bars on the wings and fuselage to show through. I had some difficulty in keeping them intact during application and found it necessary to apply a matt polyurethane lacquer to protect them afterwards. All in all, I think that thin, self-adhesive vinyl might have been a better solution.





Placement of the electrics and the elevator servo

Final Fitting Out

The secret of good performance in models such as this is to keep the weight down. I used Multiplex's little RX-5 receiver which sits on the fuselage floor under the rear cockpit and is fastened in place with Velcro. I also chose a 2-cell 1400 mAh LiPo battery which I had in the battery box and at just over 2 oz, this was going to compare favourably with a 7-8 cell NiMH pack at three times the weight. The small sacrifice in voltage/wattage more than compensates for the saving in weight. Balance is critical and, thankfully, there is plenty of room on the battery tray to achieve correct centre of gravity. I used Velcro again to locate the battery with the addition of one of those garden plant ties which keeps the battery strapped down and which is removable by simply twisting the tie to unfasten it.

After connecting everything up, it was time to switch on the transmitter and receiver, centralize the controls and check for correct operation.



The finished model looks very smart

Flying

Experience of other models in this range led me to believe that the Thunderbolt would fly well and I wasn't disappointed. Alfa recommend a power-off test glide to start with but my first flight was in calm conditions and the scale fuselage has no indents for thumb and finger, which makes launching single-handed difficult. So, with all checks done, it was power on and with fingers crossed (figuratively, of course) the P-47 was launched outwards and slightly upwards. I needn't have been concerned – the model was stable and climbed briskly. Despite its humble specification, the power set gives excellent performance if the weight is kept down. Fly-bys are quite fast and it is easy to place the model where you want it. Rolls are a little barrelly, not surprisingly with an absence of aileron differential, but inverted flight was achieved with just a little down-stick, a benefit of the semi-symmetrical wing-section. Loops are achievable from a shallow dive to build up speed. Landing

such a light model is easy – she just floats in with minimum throttle.

My next flight, on a windier day, revealed good penetration. The Thunderbolt handles well in these conditions with more than adequate control responses. Despite its low weight, this is not just a fair weather model.

Conclusion

This model is not for a beginner but will suit a pilot with aileron experience. It flies in a scale-like manner and looks realistic in the air. It is completely lacking in vices and with low weight, performs extremely well. The P-47D is small enough to throw in the back of the car and offers good value for money with the power system featured here. **Q&EFI**



Q&EFI
Specification

MODEL INFORMATION

Name: P-47D Thunderbolt
 Part Number: AM0212
 Manufacturer: Alfa Model, Czech Republic
 Distributor: CML Distribution Ltd
 Tel: 01527 575349
 Email: sales@cmldistribution.co.uk
 Price: Kit: £84.99 RRP
 Speed 300 propulsion set: £44.95
 (Does not include cell pack)
 Construction: Foam/ply

R/C FUNCTIONS

1 Elevator
 2 Ailerons
 3 Speed Control

MODEL SPECIFICATIONS

Wingspan: 830 mm
 Length: 710 mm
 Wing area: 12.4 dmsq
 All-up weight: 430 g max.

DISLIKES

Flimsy decals

LIKES

Easy assembly
 Quality finish
 Performance