

## ***XS-Models 1/48 Curtiss R3C-1 – Conversion kit review***

### ***Anders Bruun***



**XS-Models "Curtiss R3C-1 #43 Pulitzer Trophy Winner"** (kit number 0480153C1RC). 1/48 conversion kit containing four resin parts, eight etched metal parts and decals. XS-models, Neuer Weg 18, D-38302 Wolfenbüttel, Germany (info@XS-models.com, www.xs-models.com, phone +49 53 3197530, fax +49 53 31975353)

#### ***The plane***

The R3C-1 was the last in the successful line of Curtiss landplane racers. It was a development of the previous R2C-1 - externally they were very similar, but the R3C-2 had a thinner wing profile and improved light-weight construction. The engine was also new, although it too was a development of earlier constructions. It was the Curtiss V-1400, a direct-drive V-12 with a displacement of exactly 1400 cubic inches (22.9 litres). It developed a maximum of 619 hp at 2525 rpm and drove a 8'4" (2.54 m) diameter fixed-pitch forged aluminium Curtiss-Reed propeller.

Three planes were built on a joint Army/Navy program. Through their careers they were known by the Navy R3C designations - they never had any Army "R-" designations. The first plane was A-6978, which was used for common Army/Navy development work and was soon converted into the first R3C-2 floatplane racer. The second was A-6979, the Navy plane, and the third was the Army plane, which was later taken over by the Navy and numbered A-7054.

The 1925 Pulitzer Trophy race was held at Mitchel Field, Long Island, on October 12th, after being postponed two days because of rain and high winds. It consisted of two

heats, a first "gold division" heat between the Army/Navy R3C-1s, and a second heat for standard Army fighters. The distance was four laps of a triangular 50 km (31.07 miles) course. Lt Alford Williams in the Navy #40 took off first and 1/Lt. Cyris Bettis in the Army #43 followed two minutes later. Cy Bettis took it easy in the early running and improved his speed during the race, winning at a somewhat disappointing 248.975 mph (400.687 km/h), while the performance of #40 decreased during the race to a final 241.695 mph (388.971 km/h) – slower than Williams' winning speed in the 1923 race in the Curtiss R2C-1. Williams was later blamed for having treated the engine of his plane too roughly with a lot of full-throttle test flying, instead of breaking it in gently. Prize money was \$2000 for first place and \$1000 for second.

After the race the participating planes were quickly converted to floatplanes in preparation for the 1925 Schneider Trophy race, which was held only two weeks later in Baltimore, Maryland. That was another success for the US Army, with Jimmy Doolittle in A-7054 winning. The three R3Cs were back for the 1926 Schneider Trophy, with two of them re-engined with new Curtiss and Packard engines. The US effort that year was hampered by bad luck and some incompetence, but A-7054 took a second place after Mario de Bernardi's Macchi M.39.

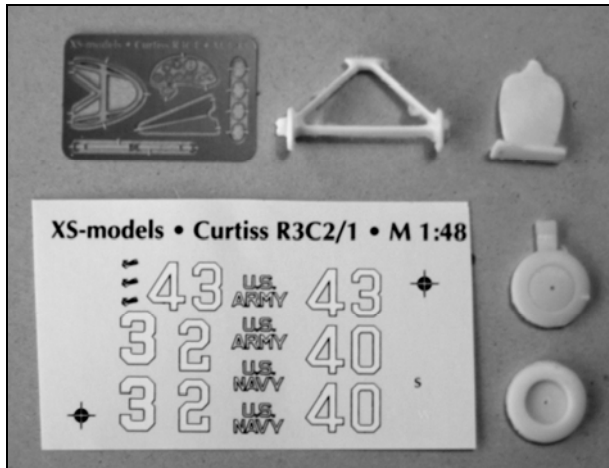
The performance of the R3C-1 was a bit disappointing. It had reached the end of the development potential of its technology. It would take something else than fixed-gear biplanes with normally aspirated, direct drive engines and fixed-pitch propellers to achieve a significant increase in speeds. The R3Cs signalled the end of US military spending on development of high-tech racing airplanes. They also signalled the end of Pulitzer Trophy races - the 1925 event was the last.

#### ***The kit***

The only earlier 1/48 kit of the R3C-1 is the Atelier Noix resin kit (reviewed in BT#17), which has been out of production for several years and will be very difficult to find, and very expensive, today.

Now XS-Models fill this gap with this simple conversion for the old 1/48 Testors/Hawk R3C-2 floatplane kit. The kit includes landing gear, wheels and rear cockpit bulkhead in resin. These are well cast, but some flash will have to be removed. The etched parts include a beautiful instrument panel and the complex former in front of it, as well as the seat harness. These should greatly enhance the look of the open cockpit. Further etched parts provide the tail slid fairing and four access hatches for the rear fuselage. The decal sheet provides race numbers, "US ARMY"/"US NAVY" texts and small Curtiss logos for the rudder. The decals in fact cover both the Army #43 and the Navy #40 versions, although only #43 is described in the instructions. The instructions are detailed and show photos of the assembly of the kit.

***BENT THROTTLES #43***



I don't have the Testors/Hawk kit, so I haven't had a chance to check how the parts fit, but I suspect any problems of the conversion might come from the original kit, rather than the conversion parts.

#### **References**

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- **Reed Kinert:** "Racing Planes and Air Races, Volume II" (Aero Publishers, 1967)
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- **Peter M. Bowers:** "Curtiss Aircraft 1907-1947" (Putnam, 1979)
- **Don Berliner:** "World Wide Directory of Racing Airplanes, Volume 1" (Aviation Publishing, 1997)
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- **Bent Throttles #17**, December 2000

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