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The new year is upon us! *Are you ready for some combat?* I know I am. While the weather out here in New England may not be so kind as to let us fly, I had the opportunity to fly with my dad (Chuck Rudner) and Rich Lopez in the warm California sun this past week, and Don Repp two weeks before that. After almost two months without flying I must say that the rust was already starting to show, but it was great to be out there and to get in a few matches with some great pilots.

As many of you may be aware from talking to me or reading my previous columns, I am a big fan of organization. I feel that it's very important to keep your equipment in good shape, and to have everything well sorted out and organized before arriving at a competition. To some extent, I think that a peek into someone's flight box is like a peek into his/her state of mind. If tools are strewn everywhere, and spare parts hard to find or hidden from view, then it is likely that during the course of the competition this disarray may manifest itself as a distraction to the pilot that can hinder his concentration and ultimately hamper his ability to win matches.

Several years ago I came up with an idea for a very organized and simple pitting system. It consisted of a flat board on which a battery, 2 syringes, and a few essential wrenches were mounted. The idea was to keep the most essential items that would be commonly needed during a match available and easy to find in plain view. All other tools and materials that I wanted to take with me to the circle were stored in a canvas tool bag that I purchased at Home Depot. As an added bonus, the board was designed to fit precisely into the bag for transport.

This system worked very well for many years. Over the course of those years, I began to discover the strong and weak points of the setup. The board itself has been very convenient all along, with the exception of the battery cable which began to give me some trouble recently. While I could get most of what I needed for a match inside the canvas bag, items would sometimes get lost in its deep pockets. Additionally, there were many items needed at a contest (but not necessarily in a match) that I could not carry in the bag. As a result, I eventually ended up with two bags and a plastic crate full of tools/equipment, which made traveling somewhat inconvenient and increased my chances of forgetting or losing an item.

In an attempt to eliminate these shortcomings, I designed a new pitbox. Ideally, I hoped to roll the functionality of the board, the two bags, and the crate all into one convenient box, while eliminating some of the needless excesses of the old system. My specific goals were to come up with a design that could be used both for (air)travel to and from contests, as well as in the circle as my primary tool kit. Additionally, I did not want to lose the convenience of my old pitting board on which I could always find the essential items at a moment's glance.

The solution that I have come up with is my own variation on the Russian-style pit box. For those who are not familiar with these boxes, they are typically rectangular boxes with hinged lids that can be closed to seal everything inside (good for rainy days and transportation). These boxes are also usually equipped with a shoulder strap for hands-free carrying to and from the circle. Larry Driskill recently gave a very good discussion of these pitboxes as well as his own system in his column in *Flying Models* magazine. If you can get your hands on a copy, it's an interesting read.

The total outer dimensions of my box are 20" \times 8" \times 10" ($\ell \times w \times h$), the top 2" of which are the lid of the box which is attached by a piano hinge. Once opened, the inner surface of the lid will act roughly as the pitting board did for me before, while the main part of the box will be divided up into specialized compartments and tool holders to keep everything just where it belongs.

Construction of this box is currently underway. I have been taking digital photos of it along the way to document the process. Upon completion, I will post those pictures as a construction article on the F2D News website. Keep an eye out for that article, but don't hold your breath because it may be a while before it comes up. Rudner out.