

F2D News - May 2007

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I wish I could be writing to you this month about all the recent pre-summer flying that we've been doing in New England, but the fact of the matter is that we're still experiencing some post-winter doldrums rather than pre-summer excitement. This is not to say that combat is on hold here; two weeks ago we opened the F2D season with the Wingbuster Spring Kickoff in Middleboro, MA. It was a cold and windy day, but we flew nonetheless and began shaking off the cobwebs. The beginning of the season is always a tough time to get through, and that will be the subject of my article this month.

Before I get on to the main topic, I want to mention some related news. I hope that everyone who has access to *Model Aviation* read Phil Granderson's recent Control Line Aerobatics column. For those who don't know (shame on you), Phil is both a legendary combat pilot in his own time and a masterful builder and tricks flier. Last month he wrote to stunt fliers about the difference between practice and training, drawing on his early experiences learning how to fly combat. I don't know how well they took it, especially those who may not have known about his sordid past in the combat ranks, but in his article he spelled out some crucial and very general concepts about training that can be viewed as a recipe for improvement in any sport. If you haven't read it, do it. If you did read it already, read it again.

At the beginning of the season, you should not be flying as well as you were at the end of the previous season. As with any sport, the mind and body need to be trained to excel in combat. If you train throughout the season, your body will adapt and become more optimized for wiggling the handle, flipping propellers, etc. During the off-season while these skills are unused, your body will become more optimized for wielding a fork and knife, and flipping channels on the TV. If you don't notice a difference after 6 months away from the sport, then chances are that you haven't pushed yourself to achieve your maximum potential in the previous season. It's not a bad thing, it just means that if you start a proper training course you'll have that much more improvement to look forward to.

This time we're passing through can be very frustrating. In our clearest and most recent flying memories, we were much better and smoother than we are now. It will all come back, but in this time maybe more than any other, it is really important to keep your mental state in order. At the Wingbuster contest, the wind plus early season effects led to quite a few hairy situations. This is not unexpected, but if you get razzled by it, things can only get worse. As frantic as combat look from the outside, successful pilots remain equally calm through thick and thin, rain or shine, line-twist or mid-air, and especially the freak situation that is so unexpected that I can't even think of it right now. Developing this type of calm, unaffected demeanor during combat may require some serious effort, but it's well worth it in, and possibly out of the circle (on the road, for example).

That's all I have to say on the subject for now. Keep rollin' with the punches.