

F2D News - July 2009

Mark Rudner
rudner@mit.edu

After some early setbacks, the New England F2D season is ON. Following Pat Willcox's lead, we obtained a one-time waiver from the AMA to run the first contest of the year as "shutoffs-optional" in order to help smooth the transition. Our order of swing-arm shutoffs arrived literally at the 11th hour, which meant that there was essentially no time to work with them beforehand. As a result none of the New England natives were able to run shutoffs this time. Fortunately, Chuck Rudner was on hand with a full set of working gear to demonstrate. He also provided the field with a wealth of valuable information on how to setup and use both the swing-arm and string-and-spring shutoffs. I was happy to see that the shutoffs and information were received with great enthusiasm, and look forward to seeing how everything comes together for the next contest.

Speaking of fields, I think we've landed in combat heaven. The contest took place on a new athletic field behind Silver Lake High School in Kingston, MA. We've previously held contests on other fields at this school, but the new field is lightyears ahead of all the others. Perhaps the sod farm in San Diego, CA and the AYSO fields in Riverside, CA where Bill Maywald holds the Riverside Combat Challenge can compete in terms of quality, but this field has the advantage of much greater contest availability. I'm talking about a secluded field, shielded from neighbors by forest, with pristine grass spreading out as far as you'd care to walk. We didn't measure, but I estimated you could fit probably 12 circles there with no problem. We're all excited about this field, and looking forward to showing it off to more out-of-towners in the future!

After a 7-month Winter recess, the flying quality was pretty good. Greg Wornell rose to the top for his first F2D title since coming back to the combat scene a couple years ago. He's been working a lot on his flying and on the trim of his models, and it's really starting to pay off. In the past I've written about the importance of setting up models properly. As Greg has come to understand, this pursuit has many layers. On the first level, it is critical to straighten all models, removing any warps that may have been built in or developed over time on the rack. Beyond this however, the "quicker" you set up your models (more responsive, less nose-heavy), the better their performance will be in the turns. No joke, this can seriously make up for even a modest lack of power. On the flip-side, you can have all the performance in the world, but if you can't put the model where you want it then it's not going to do you any good. The only way to find the optimal balance for yourself is through experimentation and by pushing your own limits a bit.

If you're comfortable with your ability to put your model where you want it but can't seem to get the cuts you want, try pushing the engine back a bit to quicken things up. In practice it's good to try to push yourself out of your comfort zone, and allow yourself to grow accustomed to the touchier setup. At contest time, however, pay very close attention to your flying, and if you notice that you're having trouble staying in control or the model is ending up somewhere other than where you want it, don't hesitate to bump the engine forward a bit to tone things back down. Remember that self-evaluation and the ability to make adjustments on-the-fly is a critical tool in your mental pitbox. Gradually moving towards quicker and quicker models can be a really powerful component of the long-term development of your flying. Rushing it by changing too quickly or trying to get used to it suddenly during contests won't do it though; the only way to make it work is through regular test flights between contests that give your brain the chance to develop the right connections for finer and finer control.