

F2D News - December 2011

Mark Rudner
rudner@mit.edu

Hello again. We made it – 2011 is now drawing to a close, and so is my European adventure of the last three months. In a few days I will head back to the US, but before I go, I would like to recount some great aeromodelling experiences that I had over here.

Previously I wrote about the incredible aeromodelling display at the Deutsches Museum in Munich, Germany. Not long after that, I was invited to join the German and Austrian (i.e. Rudy) F2D teams for a weekend of fun and flying at Lothar Hentschel's place in Taufkirchen (on the outskirts of Munich). It was a lot of fun, though I also learned about the serious problems faced by the German combat community. By the time Rudy finished one flight, an old German lady was already approaching us to tell us that we were forbidden. She just seemed like a complainer, but more importantly, it turns out that there's a law in Germany that models with internal combustion engines can only be flown if the nearest village is more than 2 kilometers away. That doesn't sound so bad, until you find out that as soon as you're 2 km from any village in Germany, you're 1.5 km from the next one. Obviously this makes finding a suitable place to fly quite difficult. As a result, Lothar and many of the others have been quite motivated to develop the technology for electric combat.

I have to admit that I was skeptical about electric combat when I first heard about it, but I was pleasantly surprised when I got the chance to experience it for myself. Of course the performance is not there yet to compete with a good F2D model, but it has already reached the level of GX/80 mph/speed limit. There is still plenty of room for improvement/optimization, and as battery technology improves the weight will surely come down. On the plus side, the models are pretty quiet, and at around 16,000 RPM produce a lower pitched hum than modern F2D engines. It seems likely that, in addition to being quieter, the shift to lower frequencies may make the noise even more neighbor friendly (though it will still annoy some people I'm sure). What I saw, though, was that the electric models were great for teaching people how to fly. There were several kids out there taking turns. Currently, they are using an RC car transmitter to control the throttle, which also allows the instructor to dial in the speed to match the student's ability (or to shut down if things get out of hand). In terms of growing the sport (and control line flying in general), I think this development could be a huge step forward. More information on their efforts can be found at these websites: <http://www.combatronic.de/> and <http://www.control-line-team.de/electro/index.html>.

Last month, I got another chance to do some flying, this time in Denmark. Ole Bjerager and his wife graciously hosted me and Henning Forbech at their home in Copenhagen. We had a great dinner on Saturday, and then went out to the Pingvinen (Penguin) Club on Sunday morning for some good old fashioned training matches (Anders, Andre, and Bjarne also joined us). One might not have expected that the weather in Denmark would be very good for flying in the middle of November, but actually it was perfect. The sun never rose very high, but the temperature was good (probably around 40 F) and there was very little breeze. Henning lent me a model, and we flew a bunch of matches until the sun retreated back below the horizon.

I'm sure I've said it before, but these experiences provided a great reminder that one of the coolest aspects of our sport is the way that it connects people from all over the world. Here I am, several thousand miles from home, living in a land where I don't speak the language, but through combat I could easily find friends with a shared passion to hang out with. We had a lot of fun, and I hope that I'll be able to return the hospitality some day.

All the best, and happy new year to everyone!

Mark