

## F2D News - December 2006

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The winter got off to a bit of a slow start here in New England (global warming anyone?), but the year is finally coming to a close. What have we accomplished this year? What have we learned? What are our plans/goals for the coming year?

I learned many things this year. For one, I learned the importance of maintaining a versatile flying style. Sometimes one strategy or approach may be very effective against a certain group of pilots, but against others it may not get you very far. For this reason it is very important to be adaptable – to be willing and able to change your strategy when a hole in it is exposed. Every pilot will always have strengths and weaknesses, perhaps a preference for offense or defense, but it is important to cultivate all aspects of your flying so that you will always have options to turn to if your first plan of attack falls flat.

This year I also learned something about pitting. While I have written in the past about the importance of learning good pitting skills and have considered myself a fairly competent mechanic, I learned that there is always room for improvement. There is more to starting an engine than connecting the battery and flicking the prop one, two, several times. There is a rhythm, a feel, a finesse to it that can only be learned by experience and practice, but can greatly improve the efficiency of this procedure. It's no accident that many Russian and former Soviet mechanics start these engines regularly without any form of finger protection whatsoever.

I also witnessed the benefits of carefully constructed training routines for less experienced pilots. On several occasions throughout the year, I flew with Ken Hargreaves and led him through several instructive drills to help solidify some foundational aspects of his flying. In my eyes (you can ask him yourself for his opinion), these drills were quite successful and I saw a lot of growth in his flying over the course of the year.

For the coming year, my plans are to cultivate some new aspects of flying, and to concentrate a bit more on getting in tune with the machine itself. My hope is that these things will round out my flying and pitting skills, thus bringing me closer to having the elusive “total package.”

What about you? Where have you come from, and where are you going? How will you get there?

This Thanksgiving, I had the chance to go down to Philadelphia to spend the holiday with the families of Andrey Nadein and Alex Prokofiev. Alex is a world class pilot and class-act guy who recently moved from Moscow to the Northeast. I hope that everyone will join me in welcoming him to our group, and that you will all have a chance to meet him soon in the combat circle.

Happy New Year, and Good Luck in 2006!