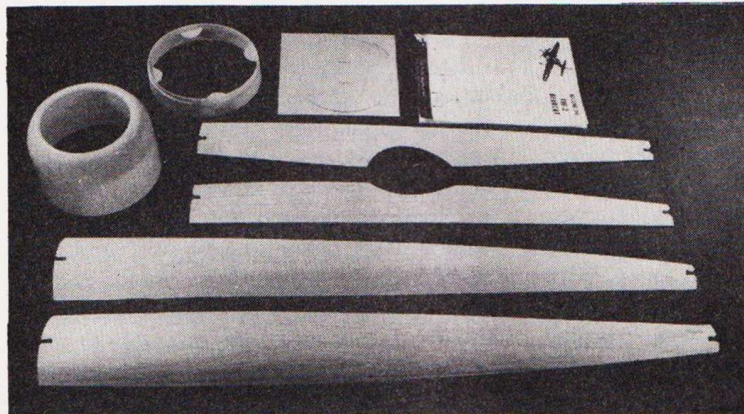
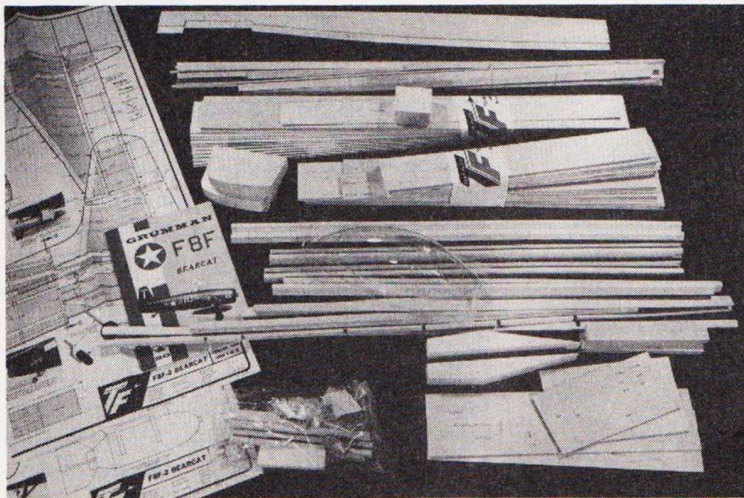


# RCM PRODUCT REVIEW

## Top Flite F8F BEARCAT



### SPECIFICATIONS

Name	F8F BEARCAT
Aircraft Type	WWII Stand-Off
Manufactured By	Top Flite 1901 Narragansett Ave. Chicago, Illinois 60639
Mfg. Suggested Retail Price	\$99.95
Available From	Both Mfg. and Retail
Wing Span	60 Inches
Wing Chord	11 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (Avg.)
Total Wing Area	630 Square Inches
Fuselage Length	43 Inches
Stabilizer Span	27 Inches
Total Stab Area	142 Square Inches
Mfg. Rec. Engine Range	.60
Recommended Fuel Tank Size	12 Ounce
Recommended No. of Channels	4 +
Rec. Control Functions	Rud., Elev., Throt., Ail. (Flaps & Retract Gear opt.)

#### Basic Materials Used In Construction:

Fuselage	Balsa
Wing	Balsa
Tail Surfaces	Balsa
Building Instructions on Plan Sheets	Yes
Instruction Manual	Yes (6 pages)
Construction Photos	Drawings

### RCM PROTOTYPE

Radio Used	Ace 7 Channel
Engine Make & Displacement	O.S. .60 FSR
Tank Size Used	Kraft 12 Oz.
Weight, Ready to Fly	150 Ounces
Wing Loading	34.3 Oz./Sq. Ft.

### SUMMARY

#### WE LIKED THE:

Aero series F8F book included in kit, flying characteristics, easy construction and good directions, scale details on plan sheets.

#### WE DIDN'T LIKE THE:

Missing wood (see text).

The last of Grumman's famous "Cat" family, the F8F Bearcat, originated from such combat-proven fighters as the Wildcat, Hellcat, and Tigercat. Although never used by the U.S. Navy for combat, the Bearcat did see service with the French in Indo-China and with the Thai Royal Air Force.

"The legend lives on . . ." as Top Flite says, in the form of that company's newest Stand-Off Scale kit. Your new Bearcat comes packed in an 8 pound, 42 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", snazzy red box with a beautiful picture of the F8F-2 on the lid. Upon opening you'll find everything neatly packed inside (how **do** they do that?), including two 35" x 45" folded plan sheets, a 6 page instruction manual, and a good 52 page reference book by Aero Publishers.

All die-cut parts are numbered and easy to identify. Other parts are obvious by their shape or material.

#### Construction:

This kit will surprise you as to how fast it can be built. If you put your mind to it, you can build the entire fuselage in one weekend --- we did! If you have built any of Top Flite's Superform airplanes before, you'll find this kit a snap.

Before you get out the glue, though, there are a few things to look

for. Included in our kit was a set of right and left paper templates to use in laying out the wing opening in the two bottom fuselage shells. Whether you have these or not depends on whether or not the shells are printed. Ours were semi die-cut so the templates weren't needed. Also included was a product improvement bulletin to be attached to the plan sheet. This details a change in stab construction. Guess who found this little item after the stab was already built?

The kit contains molded, die-cut, and machined wood and plastic parts. All were well done, and all parts were of good quality.

Construction will go smoothly by following the instruction manual and the plan sheets. Even so, there are several areas where you should use some caution. The following should be noted:

(1) Be careful when building the fin and stab. These areas overlap on the plan sheet and are a little confusing. Use caution (and a pencil) when marking the stab rib locations --- one reference mark ( | ) is missing for S-4.

(2) The plans show the shaped leading edges for the rudder and elevators as 1/2" x 1/4", while the wood in our kit was 1/2" x 1/2". Make allowances for this in the elevator/rudder

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## F8F BEARCAT

... sheets, or trim the leading edge stock to the plan size.

(3) The aileron leading edge stock is tapered toward the tip, but the wing trailing edge is constant thickness from root to tip. Be very careful when sanding the wing to match the ailerons that you don't sand through the wing skin.

(4) The punched holes in the tail wheel and elevator horns are too large for a good fit on the wire provided. It would be a good idea to use ball links on them to provide tighter control.

(5) F-9D is shown in two places on the plans — the dotted one is F-9B.

(6) The instructions call for, and the kit

contains, two 1/8" x 7/8" x 30" wood strips for firewall to tail block side planks. Unfortunately, the fuselage is over 34" long at this point.

(7) The supplied die-cut dihedral gauge in our kit resulted in almost 7" of dihedral rather than the 4" called for in the manual.

Other than these, no construction difficulties were encountered. These items won't cause delays as long as you're aware of them in the beginning.

We used Devcon "5-Minute" and "Slow Cure" epoxies, Gluit aliphatic, Hot Stuff, and lots of Super Jet adhesives to stick things together.

We found several small items missing from our kit. After checking with Top Flite, they have completely changed their procedure for packing kits. These kits, being very complex with many parts and material involved, are now packed in a different way to eliminate any shortage of material. Each packer initials the kit they pack.

**Covering:**

Our Bearcat is completely covered with K & B 3/4 oz. glass cloth and two coats of K & B resin. Two coats of "mostly sanded off" auto primer and two light coats of R & S Perfect Sea Blue are topped with two light coats of Red Devil brand satin polyurethane. This provides a pleasing finish that adds about 13 oz.

**Engine:**

More than enough power comes from an O.S. .60 FSR and a Top Flite 12/6 Power Prop. A simple exhaust stack through the cowl side is made from a section of Du-Bro aluminum extension. The engine has 3° down thrust using Sterling nylon thrust wedges. A Kraft 12 oz. tank is installed as per plans.

We suggest you provide some additional cooling by some sort of baffle around the engine head. It will help to open up the top cowl flaps as well.

**Radio:**

Ace 7 channel radio equipment is used to control the four main functions plus flaps and Rhom-Air main retracts. There is ample room for uncrowded radio installation.

**Flying:**

Our Bearcat is balanced about 3/8" forward of the front mark shown on the plans. This required some additional nose weight. After the second flight, half of the weight was removed to locate the C.G. between the two plan marks. This made the airplane a little more touchy than we like so the weight was reinstalled. At this balance, the airplane is a very stable and smooth flier.

Control travels are not called out on the plans. Ours are as follows: ailerons 1/2" up and 3/8" down; rudder about 5/16" both ways (restricted by horn location); elevator 3/4" up and it hits the rudder horn on down --- **you will need a lot of up to flare on landings**; flaps deflect about 60°.

No trims were displaced from neutral except for elevator, which has about 1/2 of the down trim put in for level flight --- this is needed even with the engine down thrust.

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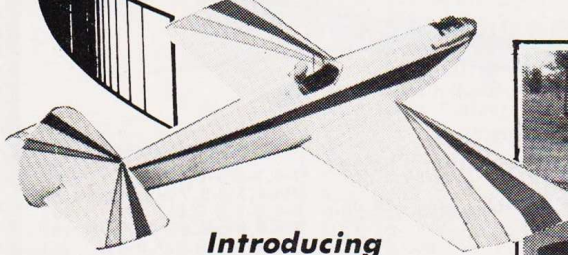
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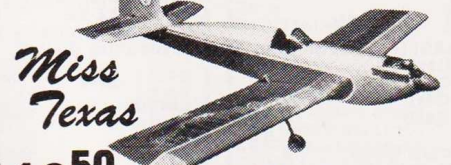
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## F8F BEARCAT

This reviewer is not very familiar with flaps, so he doesn't use them at all on take-offs, and only use about 1/2 flaps on landings. This way landings can be made quite slow.

The only real problem encountered was trying to taxi on our rough grass — this plane is so stubby it tends to bounce a lot.

### Conclusion:

Top Flite's F8F-2 Bearcat is advertised as

a Stand-Off Scale model. If your goal is competition you'll probably find some things you'll want to modify to suit yourself. Ours was built to be an every day airplane, and slight deviations from scale do not matter to us. But, in comparing the model with the photos in the Aero book, it seems that the tail fairing of the F8F-2 is a little different from that of the model as kit-built. Also, the kit cowl is identical to the Corsair cowl and does not fair into the fuselage lines as on the real F8F-2.

When all is said and done, this kit will give you an excellent model of a great airplane. Build it according to the instructions and you will have a distinctive appearing and great flying machine. □

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