ARFS & BARFS

by
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ARFS are a way to get into flying RC planes quickly. They get you from point A(beginning) to point B(flying) very quickly. I think it's like A(being born) and B(dieing) very quickly. You surely missed a lot along the way. That said lets talk about ARFS & BARFS.

There are many good ARFS on the market and a lot more bad ones(BARFS). Over the last two or three years they have become considerably better. Simple straight forward trainers are some of the best. Many high end $$$$ designs are excellent. A lot of the in between with fancy looking bells and whistles are not so great.

Normally you can find a good brand of product and stick with it. Not so with ARFS. Some examples: Yellow Aircraft has one of the best ARFS with their CAP and a BARF with their SUKHOI. Both planes are about the same size, for 120 engines, and intended for the same type of flying. Hanger 9 makes a big CAP ($800) that is the best I have seen and a CESSNA that is the worst.

Let's talk about the CESSNA for it has much in common with BARFS. It has not so well engineered engine cowl, wheel pants, fake wing struts and clear cabin windows along with some pretty spiffy graphics. These things make it look great and very appealing to a prospective RC buyer. To keep its scale like appearance they cut a hole in the firewall for the muffler. This hole leads directly into the cabin area. I saw one guy start his plane and the cabin instantly filled with a dark cloud. It seems he turned the muffler up instead of down. Be warned it takes an experienced builder, an expert flyer and considerable maintenance to keep this BARF flying.

YEAS

You can get into the air faster.

Price is a definite plus for ARFS. It would easily cost another $400-$500 to have that great Hanger 9 CAP built for you. Most ARFS are considerably cheaper then if you bought the kits and built them yourself.

NAYS

The biggest problem with ARFS is their design. I think many were designed to appeal to the spur of the moment buyer with no interest in continued RC involvement.

Instructions sometimes leave a lot to be desired. Things like <u>exactly</u> where to place control horns are often omitted. Let's face it ARFS do not teach building skills.

Next problem I see with ARFS is the lack of fuel proofing, not only around the engine compartment but around the landing gear, hinge lines and cockpit. A lot of the time this step is omitted from the ARF and the instructions altogether.
The glue used in ARFS is questionable at best. Hot melt and white glue are no-nos for firewalls and landing gears.

ARFS are also usually heavier then kit built planes.

ARFS are made to accommodate a wide variety of engine and servo types. Usually this means none fit exactly right.

ARFS are difficult to repair and it is nearly impossible to duplicate the fancy covering, especially for someone who didn't build it in the first place.

SUGGESTIONS

EPOXY: Most ARFS require epoxy glue in the 10% construction you do. Oh yea, ARFS are 90% complete and you can finish them in ten or fifteen hours. Dream on. Anyhow when working with epoxy around a model that is already covered I recommend you get several paper towels and cut each in six or eight pieces. Use a piece along with some rubbing alcohol to clean up epoxy runs or fingerprints, throw it away and get another. Don't try using the same one twice. It will keep that nifty finish looking great. Most ARFS say to join wings and install the stab and fin with slow set epoxy. The longer working time gives you the chance to adjust things and the glue is stronger. This is true, but it also gives the epoxy more time to run and the pieces more time to move. If you use slow set don't just glue together and leave before the glue sets.

CA HINGES: A lot of ARFS come with CA hinges. Personally I like CA hinges, but be careful using them. Make sure you have CA debonder and several mini paper towels handy. To keep the hinge centered I stick a pin through the middle before installing(remove the pin before gluing.) Be careful, some glue will go through the hole and out the other side. Some CA hinges have a slot cut in the middle. If you use them get the debonder in the handy gallon size, you'll need it. CA AND CA DEBONDER IS NOT COMPATIBLE WITH MOST OF THE TRIM USED ON ARFS. If they get on the trim only briefly its toast.

Z-BENDS: Many ARFS use z-bends for linkage connections (cheaper). If done correctly they work well. I don't recommend their use on the larger planes.

LOCKTITE: If the instructions say to use LOCKTITE you better do it. Better yet use it everywhere, especially on wheel collars and engine bolts.

CONCLUSIONS

ARFS purchased by experienced ***MODELERS***, after thorough evaluation, are a great way to keep in the air with quality planes.

RC trainer KITS are designed to be built by beginners using basic tools and teach fundamental building skills. Our fellow RC ***FLYERS*** who opt to start with ARFS may never acquire these skills and be doomed to ***FLYING*** ARFS and prebuilt planes. Let's hope the flying experience gives them the ***MODELING*** bug big time and they go back to point A and enjoy the trip.