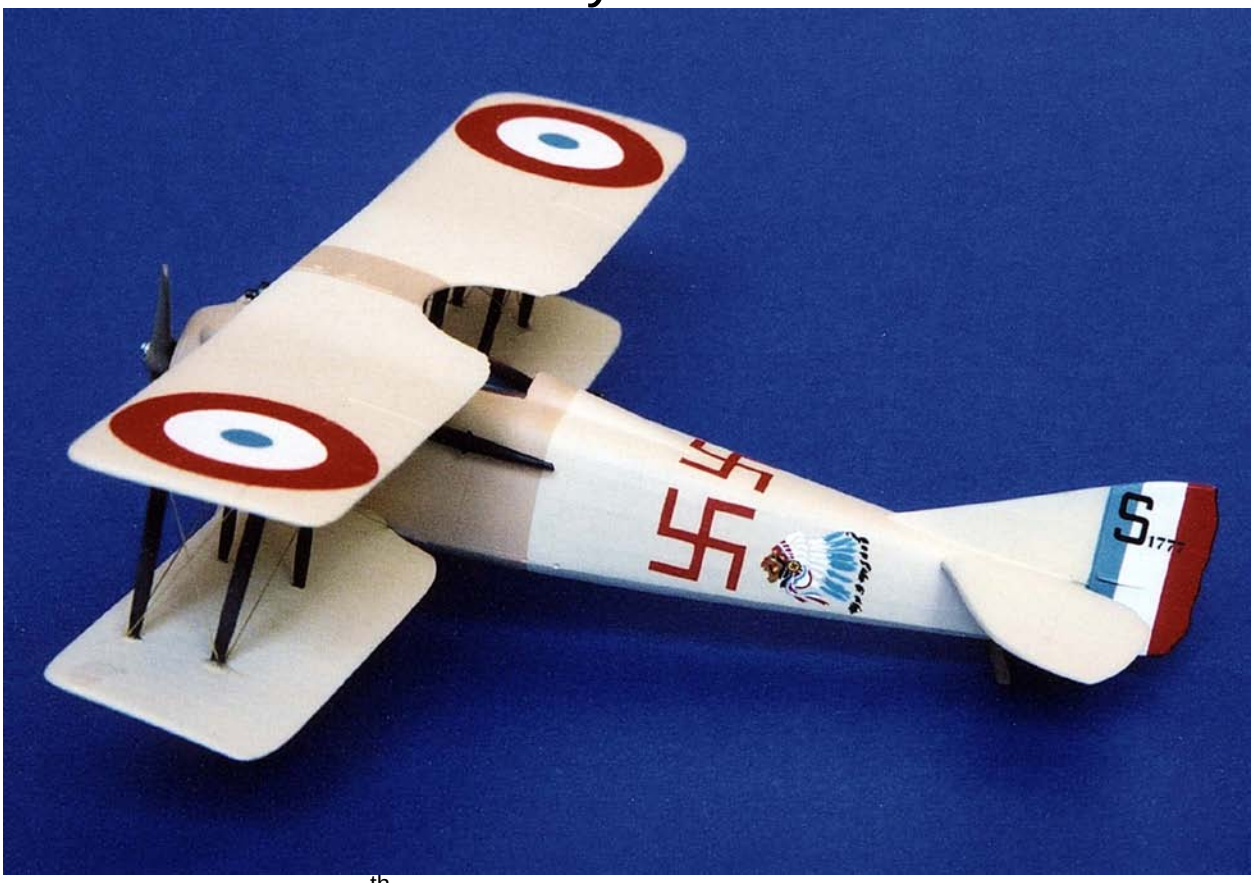
Lufbery's SPAD



1/48th scale SPAD VII by Special Hobby

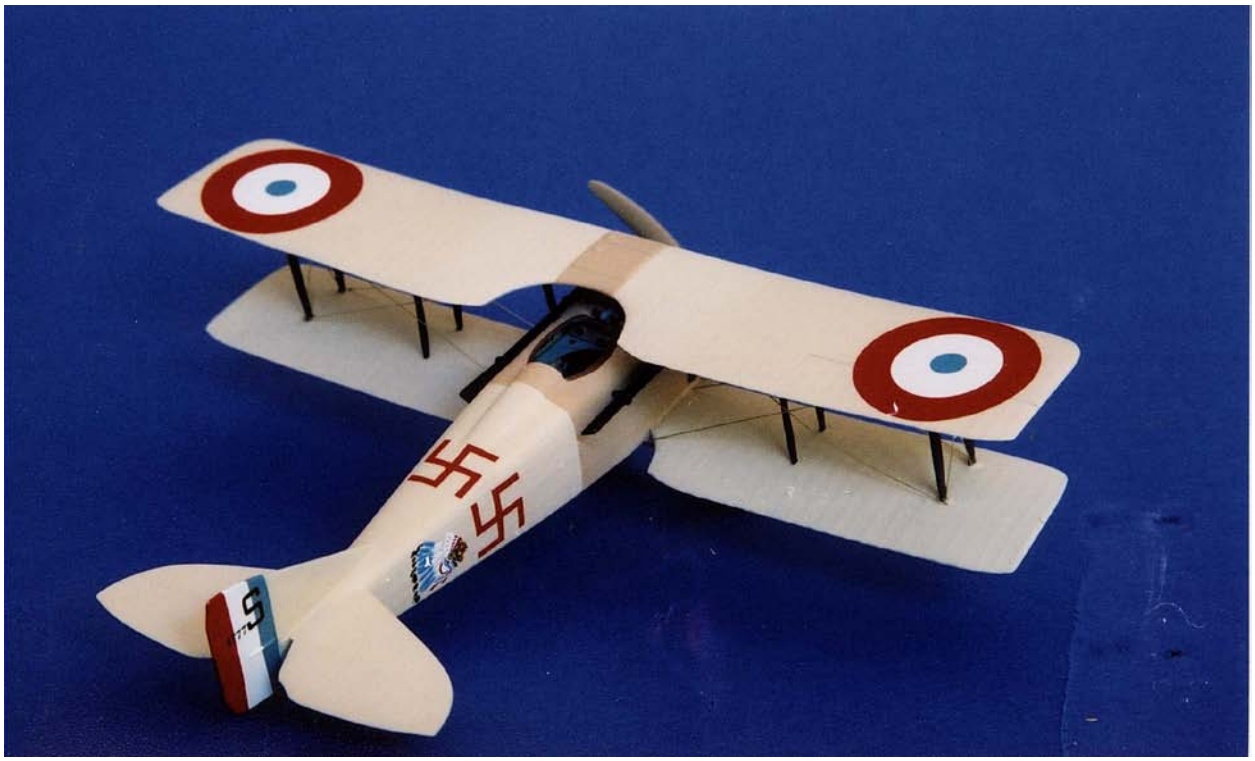
During World War I, dominance in the air war between the Allies and the German forces drifted back and forth to favor one side and then the other. For a time, the nimble French Nieuports seemed to gain the upper hand against the Kaiser's offerings. In 1916 the scales tipped to the Allies with the introduction of the SPAD VII.

The SPAD's superior performance coupled with robust construction allowed it to absorb considerable punishment and to return home to fight another day. It was in a SPAD VII that Lieutenant G. Raoul Lufbery scored the last of his 16 victories before being killed in action near Nancy.

To model the aircraft that Lieutenant Lufbery flew on the missions he scored his last three victories, you'll need the 1/48th scale SPAD VII kit produced by Special Hobby, #48010, and AeroMaster's "U.S. SPAD Aces 1918," #48-575. (This is the only decal sheet with all of the correct markings for Lufbery's SPAD.)

This kit features a full cockpit interior with etched metal details. The sidewalls are painted Model Master "wood" with the other details in the cockpit in various shades of gray to simulate metal fittings. A set of lap and shoulder belts is provided in etched metal and these are painted an off white with silver buckles.

The completed cockpit is cemented into one side of the fuselage. After checking for proper alignment, glue the fuselage sections together. Dry fit and then cement into place the cockpit coaming. This kit depicts a late model SPAD and provides a modified engine cowling in resin. The fit here will require some filler to get a smooth joint. The late model radiator, with adjustable front shutters, is also supplied. The radiator is painted silver with a dark wash to bring out the details.



The lower wings are attached next along with the vertical and horizontal stabilizers. This is a "short run" injection molded kit and has no tabs or pins for alignment. You will have to use care to assure that the parts are attached securely and are aligned correctly. The three-part landing gear is assembled and then glued into position on the bottom of the fuselage.

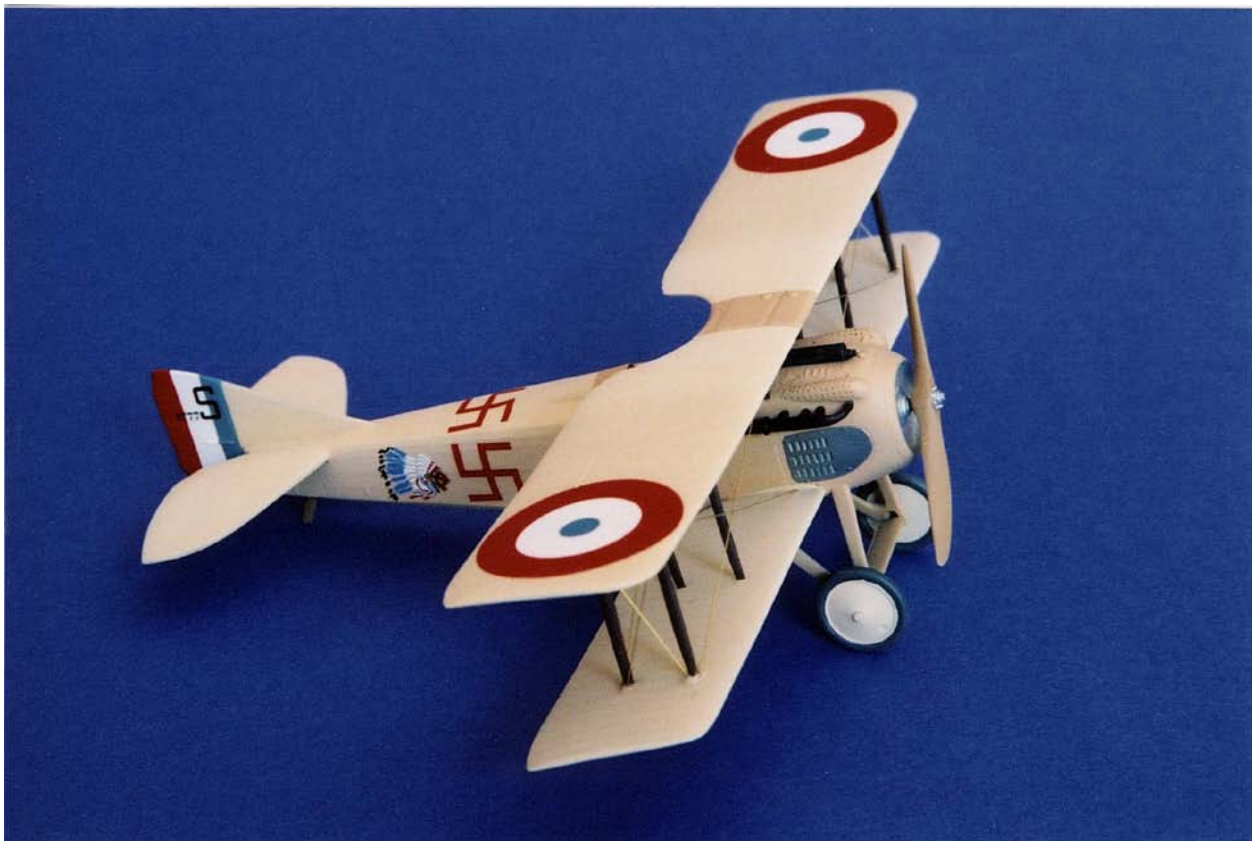
After filling and sanding any seams on the fuselage, wing roots and tail assembly, stuff a little wet tissue into the cockpit opening to prevent any overspray during painting. Lufbery's SPAD, S1777, was inherited from Didier Masson and appeared, without camouflage, in unpainted doped linen. Model Master "radome tan," FS-33613, mixed with a drop or two of red, is a close match to this color. (The red will impart the required pinkish tint to the yellow "dope" color.)

The entire aircraft is painted in the doped linen color except for the metal covered portions of the cockpit and engine compartment. The yellow that was painted over the metal is a close match to Model Master's "Africa braun," RAL-8020, lightened with a few drops of white.

I used Jon Guttman's "SPAD VII Aces of World War I" from Osprey Publishing as a source of information. A drawing of Lufbery's SPAD appears on pages 54 and 62.

When the fuselage is dry, mask around the engine cooling vents on the side of the fuselage and spray them with “gunmetal.” The wheel hubs are painted with the “Africa braun” and when dry masked off and the tires sprayed “anthracite grau,” RAL-7016.

The cabane, inter-plane, and outer wing struts in my kit were misshapen. I replaced them with .020 plastic strips from Evergreen Plastics. I sanded each strut to an airfoil shape and painted them “wood.”



After applying a coat of Testor’s Glosscoat over the wings and fuselage, I applied the markings of Lufbery’s aircraft as it appeared in December 1917. The red “swastikas” that appeared on the top and sides of the aircraft were Native American symbols of “good luck” used by members of the Lafayette Escadrille.

The decal stripes that appear on the tail did not fit properly. I replaced them by first spraying the entire rudder white and then masked and painted equal sections insignia red, FS-31136, and French blue.

With the aircraft painted and decaled, I carefully attached all of the wing struts to the bottom wing. Attaching the top wing to the struts is tricky and requires patience. With the top wing in place, I used a pair of dividers to measure the length of each wire for the rigging.

I used .008” diameter brass wire from Detail Associates for this task. SPAD’s had considerable rigging. This job is time consuming but is worthwhile in finishing your model.