

Tamiya's 1/72nd scale Spitfire Mk.V



By Dick Smith

As the Battle of Britain raged, Reichmarshall Hermann Goering reportedly asked Luftwaffe ace Adolf Galland if there was anything he needed to make the Nazi's campaign go more smoothly. General Galland is said to have responded, "Give me a squadron of Spitfires."

Galland's response was only one indication of the reputation the Supermarine Spitfires attained on both sides of the war. Replacing Hawker Hurricanes as the front line fighter, the record of "Spits" reached legendary proportions in the defense of Malta and in the desert war in North Africa. An American, who joined the Royal Air Force in Canada in 1940 and later became an ace, was Wing Commander Lance Wade. One of Wade's Spitfires, a Mk. Vb, released a few years back by Tamiya in 1/72nd scale...

The Mk.V Spitfire was a Mk. I or II airframe fitted with an upgraded Merlin 45 engine. The "b" suffix indicated the aircraft was armed with two 20mm cannons and four Browning .303 machine guns.

The cockpit consists of seven pieces which is painted Model Master "RAF Interior Green." The instrument panel, which has a decal provided for the dial faces, is semi-gloss black. The Spitfire's seat, according to several sources, was made

from "Bakelite" and when left unpainted was a deep reddish color. I painted mine Gunze Sangyo's "red brown," #47. Another decal, depicting the Sutton pilot's harness, is provided and can be applied at this time.



The fuselage pieces are cemented together and the completed cockpit is slipped into place through the space in the bottom. The instructions next call for the placement of the exhaust stubs. Hold off on this step until the model's painting is complete. They can, however, be painted "rust" and set aside to dry. Glue the wings together and attach them to the fuselage.

Since this kit will allow you to build a typical Mk.Vb, or a Mk.Vb tropical version, you'll have to select the standard or "clipped" wing tips parts at this time.

Commander Wade's Spitfire did not have the "clipped wings" common to some Spitfires used in the desert for low-level ground attacks.

There are two types of air and sand filters provided in the kit. Since Wade's aircraft arrived in North Africa by way of the British air base at Aboukir, Egypt, I elected to use the "Aboukir" air and sand engine filter developed by the 103rd Maintenance Unit at that base. (The kit also contains the larger Vokes filter that was used on some desert Spitfires and Hurricanes.)

Finish the basic model construction by attaching the horizontal stabilizers and cementing the radiator cover and oil cooler shroud to the bottom of the wings. Check over all of the seams and sand and fill where necessary. The undersides of British desert Spitfires were painted "Mediterranean blue" or "Azure blue." I airbrushed the topsides with Gunze Sangyo's "middle stone," #71, and "dark earth," #72, in the standard British camouflage pattern. Wade's 145 Squadron painted the spinners of their propellers bright red. The prop blades are Model

Master “aircraft interior black” with yellow tips. The paint schemes and markings for 145 Squadron from November 1941 to February 1942 can be found at the website: www.rafweb.org/SqnMark145-150.htm.



I sprayed a coat of Testor's Glosscoat over the entire aircraft to provide a smooth finish for the decals. The kit decals were used for the roundels and fin flashes. The “Z X E” aircraft codes and “ES-252” aircraft serial number came from an old decal sheet of British squadron markings from HisAirDec, Inc. (I found this 6 x 9-inch sheet of letters and numbers at a recent model swap meet for 25 cents.) Since these decals were quite old, I brushed on a coat of MicroScale's liquid decal film before using them. (Liquid decal film coats the printed images and keeps them from “shattering” when placed in water.)

The wheels are painted “tire black” and then attached to the landing gear legs and undercarriage doors. The canopy and windscreens in this kit are very small. A steady hand and a triple zero artists' brush will work well for painting the frames. The windscreen seems to be a bit wide and even with some trimming and sanding it did not fit into place cleanly.

A light coat of dulling spray will simulate desert weathering. When all is dry, attach the clear pieces with white glue and your Spitfire is ready for action against the Afrika Corps' Luftwaffe.

