

Hobby Boss 1/72 F4F-4 Wildcat. No. 80220



By Paul Gasiorowski

The first flight of the Wildcat was in 1937 and introduced to both the US Navy and British Royal Navy (Martlet) in 1940. In all, 7,860 Wildcats were built. During the course of the war, Navy and Marine F4Fs and FM-1s flew 15,553 combat sorties (14,027 of these from aircraft carriers¹), destroying 1,327 enemy aircraft at a cost of 178 aerial losses, 24 to ground/shipboard fire, and 49 to operational causes¹ (an overall kill-to-loss ratio of 6.9:1). True to their escort fighter role, Wildcats dropped only 154 tons of bombs during the war.

This was 1 of 4 Hobby Boss Wildcat kits Easy-Builds. They were F4F-4, FM-2, FM-1 and F4F-3 Wildcats. I was going to do all 4 at the same time with different paint schemes, but picked the F4F-4 because it was on top of the stack. Basically all the kits are the same, no difference in the moldings other than the specific paint schemes and decals for each different version. The directions are in a 4 page foldout, page 1, a picture of the plane, page 2/3 outline of the tray and page 3 of how to assemble it and page 4 the paint scheme in color and decal layout.

The kit is packed in a plastic tray with one sprue, a fuselage, wing assembly and engine, propeller and 2 sprues of clear parts. The cockpit comes in either one piece or 2 pieces depending on whether you want to see the inside of the cockpit.

I started with washing all the parts in a warm soapy solution to remove any molding agent that could be left on the parts. The cockpit is very small and doesn't have a lot of



room to add any detail. I painted it the normal colors found for this particular airplane. I added some paper seat belts with a tan color, painted the seat grey, headrest red (which is a separate part). There is a gun sight to be added, this was attached and painted Silver. The tub was painted interior green, the control stick flat black. After this dried I put some tissue in the tub while the plane was painted.

To trim out the canopy for painting, I used Bare –Metal foil, bringing out the canopy frame by rubbing a toothpick over the foil. I used a new No. 11 blade to trim out the foil. After painting the canopy, I removed the Bare-Metal foil, which left a residue on the canopy. It was removed with alcohol, but dulled the clearness of the glass. I had to dip it again in Future to bring back the shine.

I attached the wing assembly to the fuselage, a little sanding was necessary to get it to fit right. It could have been forced together, but I wanted to be able to remove it before finally gluing it together for good. I then attached the ailerons to the vertical tail. A little sanding was required to get a good fit, before gluing. At this point the aircraft is ready for painting. I started with the bottom of the airplane using Aircraft Grey FS16473, did a couple of light coats and then a final coat, to insure I had good coverage. I sit it aside to dry for one day. The propeller was painted Semi-Gloss Black. I painted the wheel strut assembly Metallic Magnesium, the shock absorber white. The external wheel well covers were painted Aircraft Grey. The wheels were painted a mix of flat black and some grey thrown in to get rid of the all black, which tires really don't look like that after some use. The hubs were painted Aircraft Grey.

The next day I tape the bottom of the fuselage off with Tamiya masking tape. Before applying the tape, I put it on my hand to take off a little of the tackiness. I then applied several coats of Intermediate Blue FS 35164. Right after applying the last coat I removed the Tamiya tape and no paint was lifted. I then gave the plane a coat of Future top and bottom.



The next day I added the decals. They came off the sheet within about 15 seconds of being in the water. I cut around the roundels to eliminate any silvering that might appear. The decal sheet reference numbers and application to where they might be located were all messed up. The only ones that were right were the ones for the propellers.

I finished the prop by painting the tips yellow and adding the appropriate decals. The antenna wire was a fine nylon thread attached with super glue and a little accelerator. I then touched up the wire with flat black.

A little touch up is required for the frames where some of the paint was lifted. After putting the canopy in place you couldn't see much in the cockpit. I attached the canopy with Future along the edges.

All in all this was a quick 5 hour or weekend kit. It went together well.

I gave about 10/12 of these easy kits to my Grandson's Cub Scout den so they could get one of their patches. I hope this can get some of them into modeling, instead of playing with their hand held video games and IPod's or whatever they use to keep themselves occupied.

