

Tamiya's P-47M



By Dick Smith

If you're building a 1/48th scale P-47, razorback or bubble top, you can't do much better than choosing one of Tamiya's kits. The detail is excellent. The fit is excellent.

For those and about a hundred other reasons, I chose Tamiya's newest offering, a P-47M, as the kit that I would build for the club project which began back in January. I've always wanted to do a "black bolt" but never really had all of the references needed to convert one of the "D" kits to the "M." Tamiya did it for me!



Construction starts with the cockpit. The new kit has the flat floor (part L-5) that replaced the corrugated version that was common to the “D” models. The basic color of the cockpit is “interior green,” FS-34151. Model Master provides the exact shade right out of the bottle.

There are at least a dozen individual pieces that make up this excellent version of the Jug’s front office. True Details offers a resin “D” cockpit that you can modify to the “M,” but with all of the detail already in the kit, why bother. I did find that a True Details seat was much better than the one in the kit since it had a very convincing set of seatbelts molded into the back and seat. The belts were brushed with a light gray after I airbrushed the seat with olive drab, FS-34087.

I painted the instrument gloss black and then applied the instrument decal. This decal only has the panel’s dials and works a lot better than anything I could accomplish with a brush and paint. After the decal dried I applied a drop of glaze to each instrument face to simulate the glass cover.



Since this is highly detailed “front office,” I spent a lot of time painting the other individual pieces aluminum, black and olive drab according to my research photos. I finished off the cockpit with dots of red, silver and white on the handles protruding from the throttle, breaker boxes, etc.

Set the cockpit aside for the paint to dry and start work on the fuselage sections. Paint the inside of the tail wheel well yellow zinc chromate. (This is one of the Testor’s ¼ ounce bottles, number 1184.) The sidewalls of the main gear wells are also assembled and painted with the yellow zinc chromate before inserting

them into the right side of the fuselage. The engine firewall is painted according to the instructions and attached to the right side of the fuselage

Don't forget to paint and cement the CH-5 exhaust turbine (part B-18) into the area provided at the rear of the fuselage and the oil cooler shutters (parts C-9) into the lower portion of the engine compartment.

Trap the completed cockpit into the fuselage and cement the sides together. If each of these parts are aligned properly, the fit will be tight and clean and the seam will need no filler. This kit includes parts for several versions of the Thunderbolt. Check the instructions and pick out the proper spine and horizontal stabilizer pieces and glue them to the fuselage. On the "M" version (parts L-12, 13 and 19) are the ones you need. The fit here is also clean and will require no filler.



Another "model within the model" is the Pratt & Whitney R-2800-57 engine. Since this big radial engine is very prominently positioned on the airframe, I spent some extra time painting and detailing it before enclosing it into the cowling. A nice Tamiya touch is the open or closed cowl flaps (parts B-38 or B-39.)

Since my model would have a red cowl nose, I masked the inside of the cowling and sprayed the outside with gloss white that would serve as an undercoat for the insignia red, FS-31136.

With the fuselage and cowl parts drying, it's was time to assemble all of the parts that make up the wings. The "M" had several different inserts in the lower wing

panels. Follow the directions careful and be sure you have the right inserts in the correct cutouts. (The landing light was on a panel near the main landing gear on the “D” while the light was moved to an outboard position on the “M”.)

With all of the wing panels glued into place, attach the completed wings and horizontal stabilizers into their respective positions. Again, if you’re careful, there will be no need for filler.

The basic airframe is complete at this point. The multi-position flaps, landing gear and under wing pylons will come later. The markings I chose for my kit were from the AeroMaster sheet “Wolf Pack II” 48-649. The aircraft was 44-21127, “Pengie V,” from the 61st Fighter Squadron, 56th Fighter Group, Boxted, England in 1945. The fighter was flown by Captain Michael Gladych. There is some controversy as to whether the aircraft of the 61st were semi-gloss black or extremely dark “midnight blue.”

I’ve seen several research sources, including the Osprey “56th Fighter Group” by Roger Freeman, which indicates the aircraft were “very dark midnight blue.” (Good enough for me!) To duplicate this color, I took a full bottle of Model Master gloss black and added insignia blue until the mixture began to “look” blue. (I did this under bright sunlight conditions so I would see immediately when the blue would begin to “color” the black.)



The undersides of the 61st fighters were unpainted natural metal. Here’s where I encountered problems. Wanting to use the new Alclad II duraluminum for the underside, I first primed the model with Alclad II “gray primer and micro-filler.”

The next step was to sand and polish the primer to a scratch free shine. Next, came the Alclad II gloss black lacquer undercoat. Finally, I sprayed the Alclad II duraluminum shade. The duraluminum gives a beautiful finish that looks just like aircraft aluminum.

The next step was to mask off areas of the underside to avoid overspray from the dark blue. I used low tack Scotch drafting tape for this job. With the topsides sprayed dark blue, I began to carefully remove the drafting tape...AND LIFTED OFF SEVERAL AREAS OF THE ALUMINUM PAINT, THE BLACK UNDERCOAT AND THE GRAY PRIMER right down to the bare plastic!
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I carefully sanded out the lifted areas, reprimed with some Dulux auto body primer and undercoated with Model Master gloss black enamel. I dropped the \$8.50 bottle of Alclad II gray primer and \$9.50 bottle of Alclad II black lacquer undercoat into the trash can and resprayed the duraluminum over the repaired areas.

With the painting complete, I sprayed a coat of Testor's glosscoat over the topside and applied the AeroMaster decals. An article in Fine Scale Modeler suggested that when applying decals it is a good idea to wet the area to be decaled with some MicroSol decal solution and then apply the marking. This worked well but I did have some silvering over the dark color even when I used Solvaset. I was able to get rid of the silvering later with a several pin holes and an application of Solvaset.

The P-47M is done and it looks, well, neat. But now I'm going back to my British WWII and modern fighters and bombers.

Hey look, there's an English Electric Canberra B.2 in quarter scale!