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A Complete History Of U.S. Combat Aircraft Fly-Off Competitions: Winners, Losers, And What Might Have Been



Synopsis

Since the first days of rivalry between the Wright Brothers and Glenn Curtiss, aircraft manufacturers have been vying for lucrative military aircraft contracts and competing for prized long-term production runs. As a result, many advanced and now legendary aircraft have been designed, built, and flown in every generation of aviation development. Focusing on the Cold War era, this book shows readers how crucial fly-off competitions have been to the development of America's military air arsenal. This book not only explains in detail how fly-off competitions are conducted, it shows the reader what both competing aircraft designs looked like during their trials, and then what the losing aircraft would have looked like in operational markings had it actually won. Described in vivid detail are the specific aircraft and how they fared, as well as the inside political maneuvering and subterfuge involved in often-controversial aircraft contract awards. Beginning with the Boeing B-47 Stratojet's decisive victory over rival Convair and Martin designs and ending with today's advanced unmanned aerial marvels, this book covers every era of Post-World War II aviation. Author Erik Simonsen uses 120,000 words of text and over 550 photos, some uniquely created for this work, to provide the reader with many of aviation's most tantalizing 'might have beens'.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book details the history of post-WWII fly-off competitions, and clearly is written by an aircraft enthusiast for other enthusiasts. Brief (and sometimes not so brief) development and operational histories of the competition-winning aircraft are also provided. The production quality is excellent, the historical photos are interesting, and the "what if" illustrations are very well done " all in all, a visual feast. It is impossible to read this beautiful book without learning some interesting

aviation history. It would be a solid 5-star effort, exceptâ The author does not let implausibility get in the way of a good story. He claims (p. 111) that the F8U-3 reached Mach 2.92 by its 13th flight at the end of June. But risking serious airframe/canopy/engine damage by doing a stunt so early in the test program would have been crazy and so probably didnât happen. The widely-reported-elsewhere max speed in test of M2.34 is much more plausible and also not too shabby. And on the very next page, he says âBy August 1958, the flight envelope had increased to Mach 2.2â, which seems to contradict the M2.92-in-June story. Unfortunately, this episode raises at least the possibility that some of the other good stories related in the book might also be unreliable. The info in the aircraft data/performance tables located at the end of each chapter seems to be shot through with errors, some trivial/careless and some substantive. One example (p. 170): the service ceiling of the F-16C and F/A-18E/F are given as 50,000 ft (13,472 m) and 50,000 ft (15,240 m) respectively. Since 50,000 feet is 15,240 m and is not 13,472 m, at least one of the F-16 numbers must be wrong.

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