

DH 2 VS ALBATROS D I/D II: WESTERN FRONT 1916 (DUEL) BY JAMES F. MILLER



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Review

“Brilliantly helpful illustrations, photos, sidebars, charts, glossary, maps, and index cap this compact chronicle. Recommended.” ?David L. Veres, www.cybermodeler.com

About the Author

James F. Miller is a married father of two who lives in Naples, Florida. A commercial pilot and lifelong student of all aspects of aviation, his current research focuses on the middle years of World War I.

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BY JAMES F. MILLER PDF

The advent and deployment of the Royal Flying Corps' Airco DH 2 in 1916 effectively eliminated the 'scourge' of aerial dominance enjoyed by the Fokker Eindecker monoplanes. Spearheaded by No 24 Sqn and led by Victoria Cross recipient Lanoe Hawker, the ungainly yet nimble DH 2 - with its rotary engine 'pusher' configuration affording excellent visibility and eliminating the need for a synchronised machine gun - had wrested air superiority from the Germans by the spring and then maintained it through the Battle of the Somme that summer. However, by autumn German reorganisation had seen the birth of the Jagdstaffel and arrival of the new Albatros D II, a sleek inline-engined machine built for speed and twin-gun firepower. Thus, for the remainder of the year an epic struggle for aerial superiority raged above the horrors of the Somme battlefields, pitting the manoeuvrable yet under-gunned DH 2s - which were also plagued by sundry engine malfunctions - against the less nimble yet better armed and faster Albatros D IIs. In the end the Germans would regain air superiority, three squadron commanders - two of whom were considered pinnacles of their respective air forces - would lose their lives, and an up-and-coming pilot (Manfred von Richthofen) would triumph in a legendary dogfight and attain unimagined heights fighting with tactics learned from a fallen mentor.

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Most helpful customer reviews

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Fighter combat 1916

By Barrett Tillman

Osprey's popular Duel series returns to the Great War with a comparison of two premier fighter aircraft of 1916: the DeHavilland DH-2 and Albatros DI/II series. It's an intriguing matchup, pitting (in modern terms)

an "angles fighter" against an "energy fighter": the DH's superior agility vs the Albatros' greater speed and two-gun armament.

The DH-2 had helped end the Fokker Scourge in early 1916 but suddenly found itself on the other side of the technological fault line when Albatros appeared that summer. Though much of the text focuses on the classic clashes between No. 24 Squadron RFC and Jagdstaffel 2 (Hawker, Boelcke and Richthofen), author Jim Miller accords other players due credit, including VC recipient Maj. Lionel Rees of 32 Sqn.

As with all Duel titles, the specific machines are set within their strategic and tactical context. The actual "box score" of each fighter's wins and losses against each other remains unknown, but Miller provides a list of the most successful pilots against the DH and the Albatros types, with the totals approximately at parity.

Page 60 lists two dates for the epic Hawker-Richthofen duel: 23 November in the portrait caption and the 14th in the text. The 23rd is correct--a correction easily made in the next printing.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

1916: EVOLUTION OF THE AIR WAR OVER THE WESTERN FRONT

By KOMET

As befits any book of the "Duel" Series, Osprey has done a fine job of outlining in this book the characteristics of both the DH 2 and Albatros DI/DII fighters, which fought against each other over the Western Front from late August to December 1916.

The DH 2 fighter had been developed by the British to wrest aerial supremacy from the Germans, who, with their Fokker E-series monoplane fighters (which boasted a synchronized, forward-firing machine gun) had given British 2-seater reconnaissance aircraft a serious drubbing during the summer and fall of 1915. Entering combat in February 1916, by the time of the Battle of the Somme that summer, the DH 2 had been instrumental in winning back control of the skies over the front for the Royal Flying Corps (RFC). Faster in the climb and in level speed, the DH 2 had the measure of the Fokkers.

Then, in late August 1916, the Germans introduced the Albatros DI/DII fighters, which proved faster than the DH 2, more rugged, and boasting 2 forward-firing machine guns synchronized to fire through the propeller arc. This, coupled with the simultaneous development of the Jagdstaffeln (fighter squadrons) and the example and leadership of Germany's premiere fighter ace and tactician Oswald Boelcke, won back for Germany the aerial supremacy that it would maintain over the Western Front til the summer of 1917.

All in all, this was a fantastic, highly informative book. I highly recommend it to any WWI aviation enthusiast.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

A UNIQUE OSPREY DUEL VOLUME!

By P. A. Panozzo

Barrett Tillman, Montgomery, and Michael O'Connor are highly trustworthy reviewers and I have purchased this book based on their reviews. This is a unique volume in the Osprey Duel series in that the DH 2 was a peculiar looking aircraft. It was a "pusher" design with the engine located behind the pilot to facilitate a forward firing Lewis machine gun free of interference from the propeller. The aircraft first flew in July of 1915 and proved itself to be more than a match for the German Fokker Eindecker which had ruled the skies. (See Fokker Eindecker in action - Aircraft No. 158 for more details!) No. 24 Squadron RFC was the first squadron completely equipped with the DH 2 and garnered the most fame. To regain air superiority, the German designers countered with the Albatros DI and DII (tractor designs with twin synchronized Maxim machine guns. The author James F. Miller adroitly examines this contest for air superiority between the two

aircraft . Arguably, one of the greatest dogfights of World War One figures prominently in this duel: Leutnant Manfred von Richthofen, "the Red Baron" (Jasta 2) and Major Lanoe Hawker (24 Squadron). Also Hauptmann Oswald Boelcke's last flight in an Albatros DII is examined. For an aviation enthusiast, momentous and exciting history is portrayed in this book! I also highly recommend Sopwith Camel vs Fokker Dr I: Western Front 1917-18 (Duel). You may also appreciate Pusher Aces of World War 1 (Aircraft of the Aces). Update: Coming in January 2014 from James Miller, FE 2b/d vs Albatros Scouts: Western Front 1916-17 (Duel).

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