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# SPAD VII Vs Albatros D III: 1917-18 (Duel)



## Synopsis

When originally conceived, the French SPAD VII and German Albatros D II represented steps away from an emphasis on maneuver in aerial combat in favor of speed and durability - factors that came into play in hit-and-run tactics. At the end of 1916, however, Albatros tried to have the best of both worlds by incorporating the sesquiplane wing of the nimble Nieuport 17 into its D III. The result combined the better downward view and maneuverability of the Nieuport with the power and twin machine guns of the Albatros D II, but at a high price - a disturbing tendency for the single-spar lower wing to fail in a dive. While Albatros (and the Austrian Oeffag firm, which built the fighter under license) sought to alleviate that weakness with various reinforcing measures, the Germans developed tactics to maximize the D III's strengths and minimize its shortcomings. At the same time, the French worked to improve the SPAD VII with more power and a more reliable cooling system before moving on to the twin-gunned SPAD XIII. While all that was going on, the Albatros D III became a mainstay of the German and Austro-Hungarian air services in frequent encounters with SPAD VIIs flown by French, Belgian, British, Italian and American airmen.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“As with all Duel volumes, this one features helpful maps, rare photos and superb artwork. Five Stars.”  
Barrett Tillman, *The Aerodrome*  
“Authoritatively researched, documented, and presented... Students of Albatrosen or SPADs in particular, and WWI air combat in general should be thrilled by this book.”  
Frederick Boucher,

AeroScale – “...this 80-page work contains all that most readers would ever want to know about comparing these two fabled fighters.” – Peter Kilduff, Between the Bookends

A resident of Leesburg, Virginia, Jon Guttman is currently research editor for Weider History Publications. Specializing in World War I aviation, he has written eleven titles for Osprey including the popular Balloon-Busting Aces of World War I in the Aircraft of the Aces series.

All in the Osprey series are worth getting - some are better than others - but the photos and illustrations alone make them worth buying.

I have most of these type books offered. What now exists for me is a "collection." As a model aircraft builder, there are useful references in the series offered. and Jon Guttman is an author for which I have high regard. It has been especially interesting to me that the two aircraft featured in this book soldiered on to the end on WW1, because the aircraft that were meant to replace them, which were adjudged superior to them, had problems ranging from engines, structural, and availability. Both Spad VII and Albatros D.III were serviceable for squadrons until the Armistice was called while later models were grounded intermittently for service modifications. Therefore, both of these aircraft were kept available on either side in WW1. The color illustrations are consistently good in the Osprey book series, with excellent cockpit illustrations in color.

I really enjoy the "Duel" series, and this was one of the better ones.

## First Class

Osprey's Duel series has been something of a mix to me, sometimes an outstanding comparison, sometimes a hack. In this case it's an interesting comparison we're looking at; two of the main fighters of WWI in late 1916 and 1917, the SPAD VII and the Albatros D.III. Both were primary and later secondary fighters of the Allied and Axis forces. Mr. Guttman uses the same format Osprey has used in their Duel series (present the vehicle [general and technical], present the combatants, then assess how they did against each other) to good effect. His presentation on the SPAD and Albatros are balanced and provide good insight on each plane's development and performance capabilities with the combatants focusing on the French and Germans with good descriptions of British, Italian, and Austro-Hungarian air forces. The combat and analytical components compare

these two airplanes very nicely. I'm impressed with the work Mr. Guttman placed in researching this book and call it a solid 4.5 star book for the Osprey series that I'm rounding up to 5 stars.

Any review of this book would have to start by mentioning the fact that is part of the Osprey "Duel" series. These are relatively short books of 80 pages in length, about a third of which consists of illustration. Thus for those interested in a scholarly treatise this would not be the book to read. A more relevant question is, instead, how well does the book cover its topic considering its relatively short length? The answer is very well. First of all the book provides a good discussion of the physical characteristics of the aircraft (and their major variants). This includes a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each aircraft, especially in terms of combat vis-à-vis each other. Much of this comes from commentary of the pilots from both sides, some of whom had the opportunity to fly both types of aircraft (through captured aircraft). The evolution of the aircraft is also examined as well as combat history, pilots, training and tactics and doctrine. Much of this discussion makes use of meticulous research (i.e., the above mentioned pilot commentary on both aircraft's flying characteristics). The book also has some very nice illustrations, especially the views of both aircraft's cockpits, color plates on each, aircraft in combat and a cut-away of the gun systems of both aircraft. However, the one weakness of this book in terms of illustrations, like all in the "Duel" series covering aircraft, is the lack of a cut-away of the entire aircraft. This, in this reviewer's opinion, is a significant oversight in terms of illustration. The few pages with color paintings of the aircraft in combat would be better spent, in this reviewer's opinion, on color cut-aways of the entire aircraft instead. In short, a very good book especially considering the limitation imposed on it by its very limiting format.

The Osprey Publishing Duel series titles are extremely enjoyable and educational. It just makes sense to examine fighter planes in comparison with their principal opponent. The aviation enthusiast or the just plain curious reader can gain a lot of insight on how weapons and strategy interrelate and ultimately impact history. The Osprey books are well researched, well illustrated with archive photographs and color cutaway artwork and profiles. I particularly like the emphasis placed on cockpit layouts and machinegun placement. The great aces von Richthofen, Guynemer and Kennedy-Cochran-Patrick figure prominently in this volume! Other Osprey Duel series titles relating to WW I aircraft: SE 5a vs Albatros D V: Western Front 1917-18 (Duel) SPAD XIII vs. Fokker D VII: Western Front 1916-18 (Duel) Sopwith Camel vs Fokker Dr I: Western Front 1917-18 (Duel). and. DH 2 vs Albatros D I/D II: Western Front 1916 (Duel) The latest title is. FE 2b/d vs Albatros Scouts: Western Front 1916-17 (Duel). From the Squadron Signal

Publications I would recommend – Spad Fighters in action - Aircraft No. 93 – and – Albatros Fighters in action - Aircraft No. 46. These titles examine the development and service record of the aircraft but do not offer comparative analysis with opponents.

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