

Pfalz D.IIIa

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1/48 Scale Plastic Model Kit

WEEKEND
edition



item No. 8414

Although not hailed as one of the best Great War fighter, the Pfalz D.IIIa deserves some credit as a steady aircraft, dangerous to opponents when flown by skilled pilots. As a design of the company from the Kingdom of Bavaria, the Bavarian Jagdstaffeln were the most common users of this fighter.

The D.III was development of the Pfalz's new chief engineer Rudolph Gehringer, hired in November 1916 to help the small company, led by its founder Alfred Eversbusch, to make another step in its progress. The Pfalz was manufacturing licensed aircraft at the time, but Eversbusch was keen to get success with his own designs.

Gehringer's new design owed much of its philosophy to the Roland D.I and D.II, the fighters manufactured by Pfalz Flugzeugwerke GmbH after the production of licensed Morane types L and H (supplied as Pfalz A.1 and the various versions of Pfalz E) commenced in August 1916. The Pfalz factory in Speyer am Rhein started production of Rolands shortly after the fire destroyed the LFG Roland factory in Adlershof on September 6, 1916.

Making a virtue out of necessity

The new Pfalz D.III was powered by the Mercedes-Benz D.III engine developing 160 HP. Gehringer used a plywood monocoque fuselage manufactured in two halves from the long plywood strips diagonally placed in two layers over the moulds. After hardened the halves were glued to the internal framework, the joint was covered by doped fabric stripes cover and then whole the resulting monocoque fuselage obtained doped fabric cover to add the protection of the wood.

The technology, called Wickelrumpf in German (means wrapped fuselage) was developed and patented by the Reinhold Richter, designer of the L.V.G. Roland company. Gehringer adopted it partly because the factory had already mastered it and partly due to the lack of workers with metal machining craftsmanship, as the Bavaria (Speyer lies in the Rhineland-Palatinate state, formed after the WWII today) was an agricultural kingdom at the time of Great War.

The Wickelrumpf allowed designers to create a streamlined and very stiff fuselage. The downside of the technology was the need of precise, time consuming, thus expensive manufacturing. The fuselage had also tendency to twisting or bending due to the humidity absorbed by the wood despite of the overall protective paint of so called Schutzfarbe (protection colour), containing aluminium powder. This weakness of the technology affected performance and handling of the airplane. Wing, on the other side, was of conventional, but tough desing, the fact winning later the Pfalz D.III some sympathy of the pilots.

Child of drawing board

The prototype of Pfalz D.III flew for very first time in May 1917 and Typenprüfung (Flight Tests) was carried a month later. It is interesting the airplane used for it was not prototype, but se-

rial aircraft 1366/17 (seventh production aircraft). German military aviation Bureau Idflieg (abbreviation from Inspektion der Fliegertruppen) did not even wait for maiden flight and ordered 70 aircraft to be manufactured instead of rest of the 100-strong batch of Roland D.IIs! Another order for 300 aircraft followed in June 1917. The reason for such unusual approach is not clear.

First examples of new Pfalz D.III entered service during August 1917 with Jasta 10 being the first unit to obtain them, followed by the Jasta 4 and others. The new Pfalz was obviously better design than Roland D.IIa. It was quite maneuverable aircraft with ability to perform high speed dives, a tactics very useful for attacking enemy observation balloons. Nonetheless, the new Pfalz was received with mixed emotions.

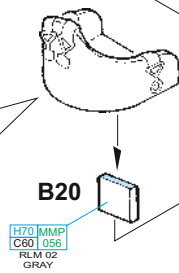
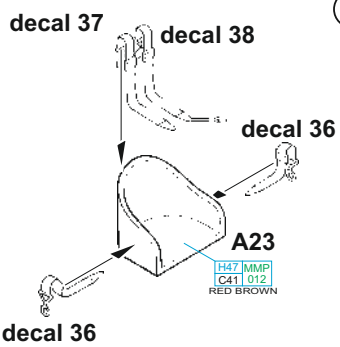
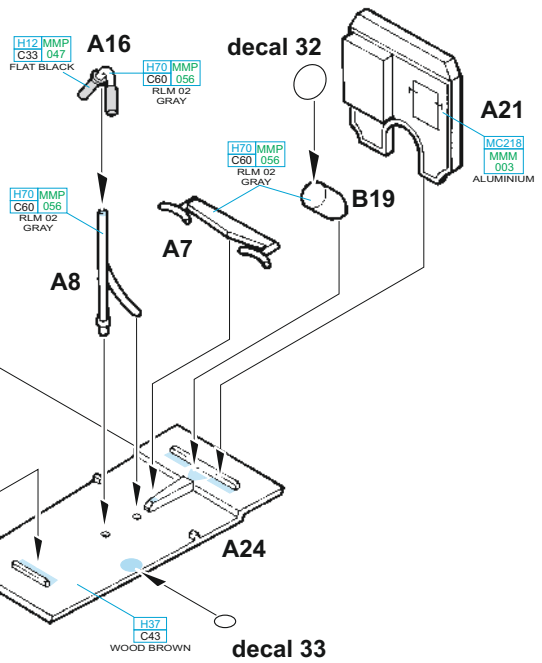
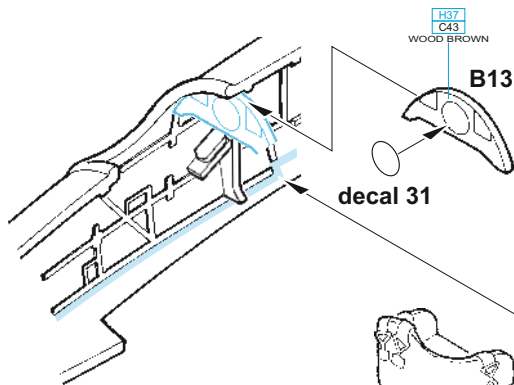
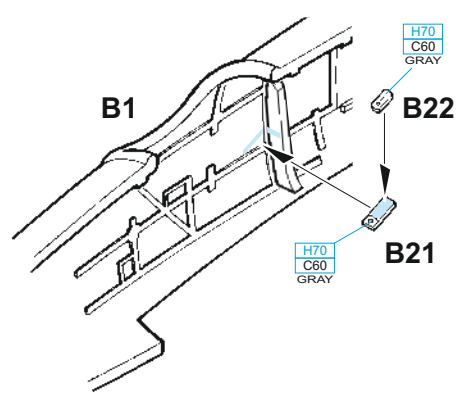
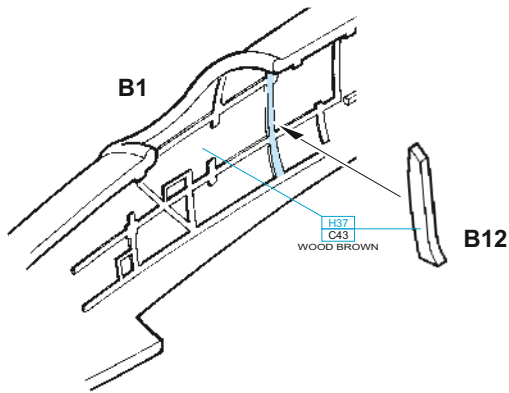
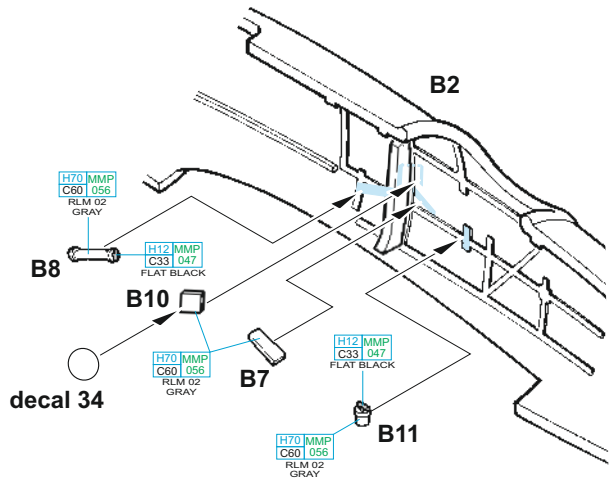
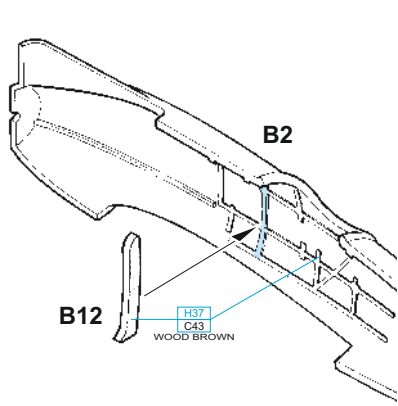
Modification to the D.IIIa

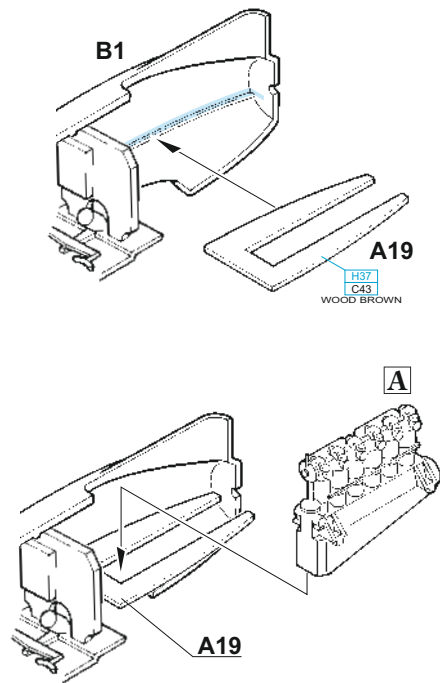
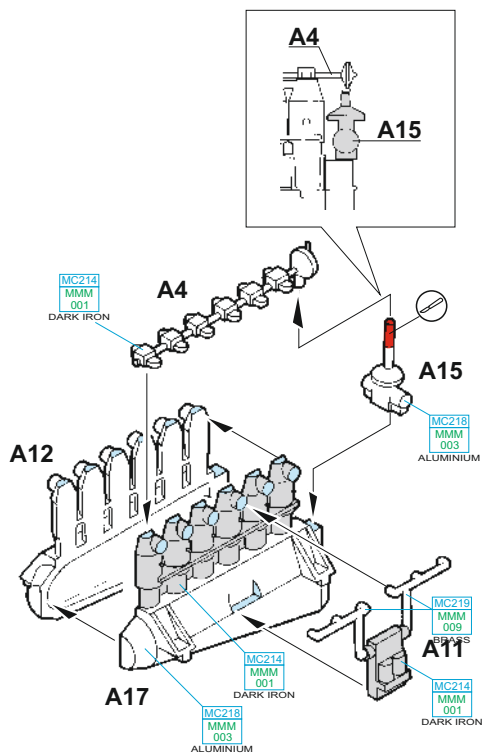
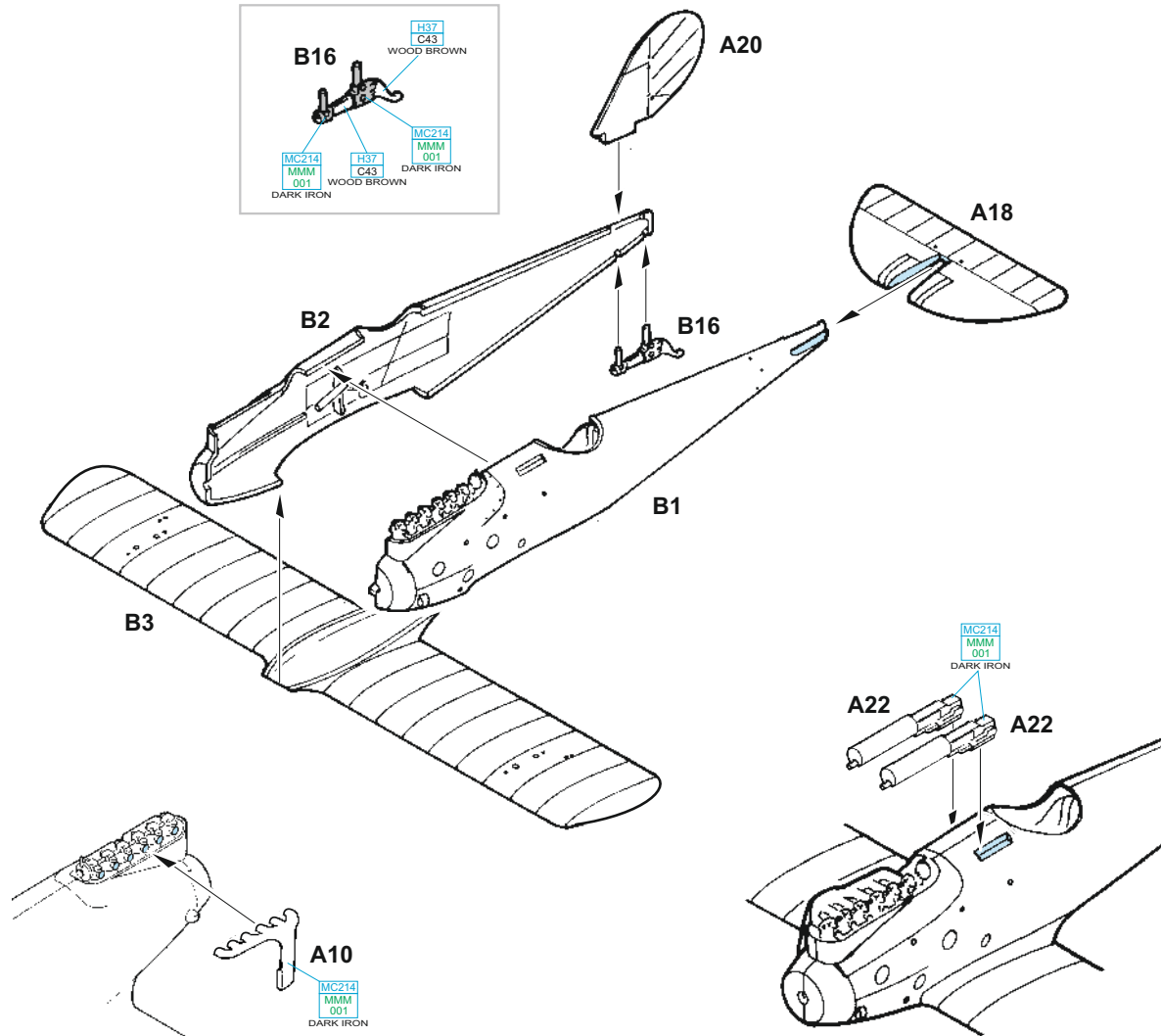
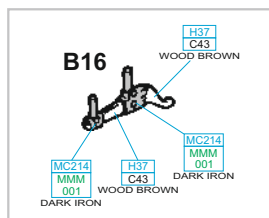
The main complaints of the pilots were heavy controls and lack of top-level flight speed of Pfalz D.III. More to it, the new Pfalz was also slow climber and had tendency to slip in turns, which was quite dangerous behavior when flying close to the ground. The aircraft also felt easily into the flat spin after stall with difficult recovery. Although some experienced pilots used it as an escape maneuver, average pilots were uncomfortable by this tendency. Nevertheless, one of the biggest discontents about the new Pfalz was placing it's MG 08/15 Spandau guns inside the fuselage. That prevented pilots from solving regular gun jams during flight. Pfalz responded with relocation of the guns to the top of the forward fuselage and starting with serial number 4165/17 the planes were delivered as D.IIIa sporting also other changes like enlarged horizontal stabilizer and cut wingtips of lower wing. It also featured more powerful Mercedes-Benz D.IIIa engine developing 180 HP. But some of D.IIIs had also cut wing and D.IIIa engine.

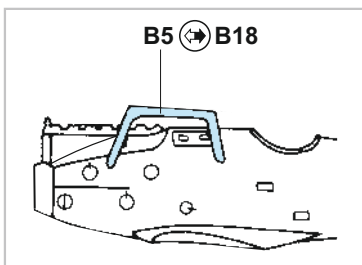
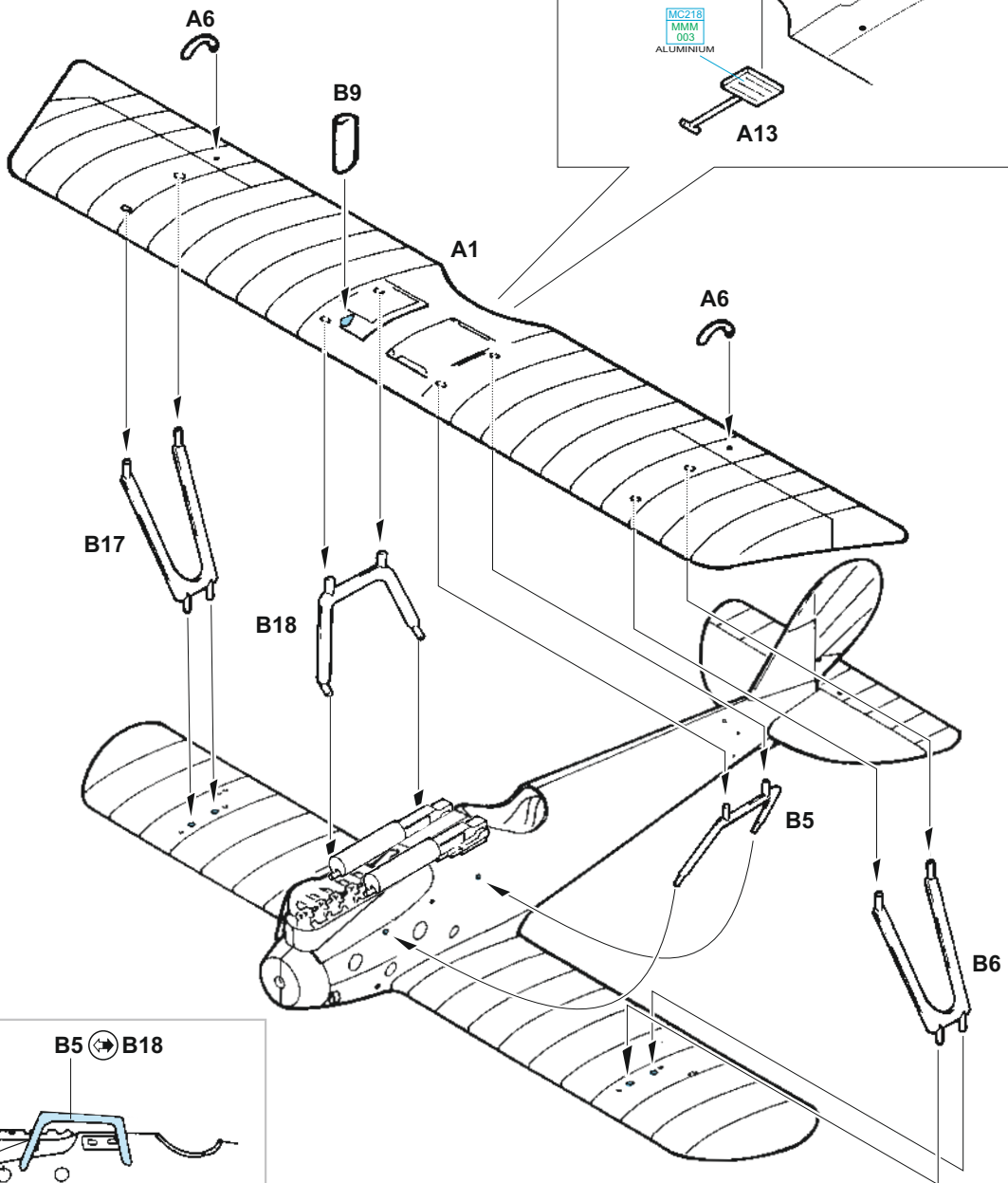
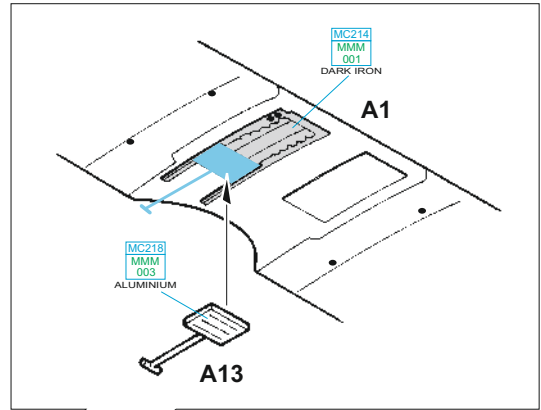
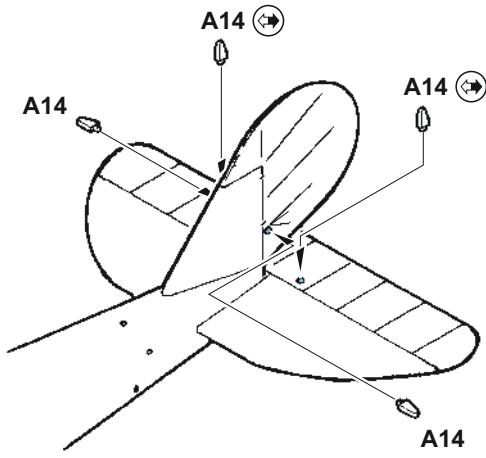
Flown by aces, but not acemaker

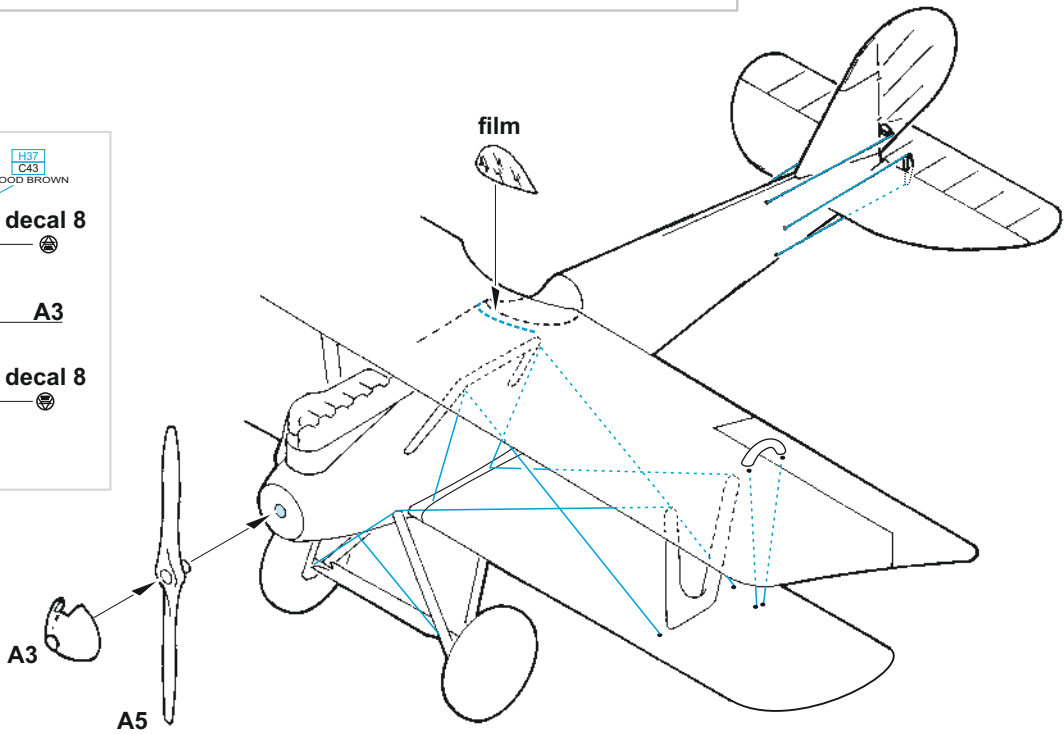
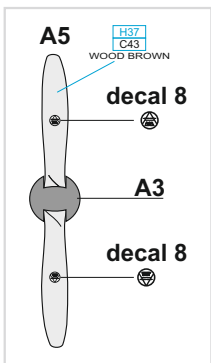
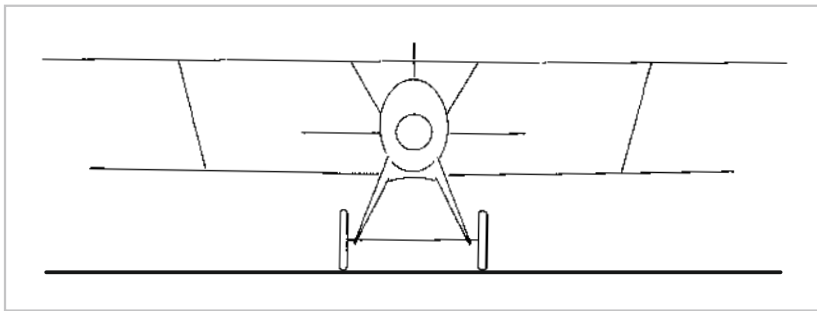
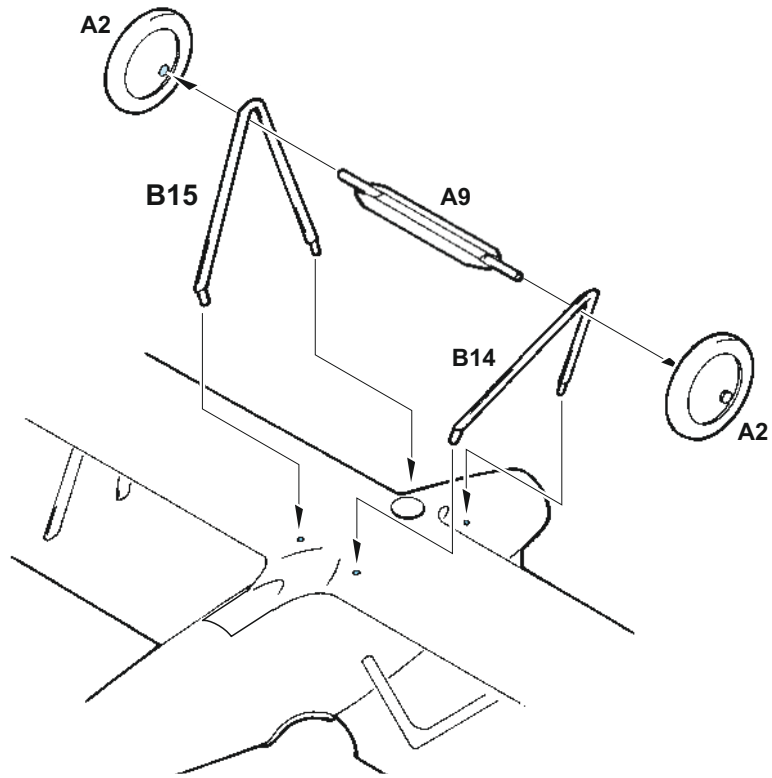
Alongside the Albatros D.III/D.V and Fokker Dr.I the Pfalz D.IIIa was one of the most important and numerous German fighter in frontline use until arrival of mighty Fokker D.VII. Many famous aces got in touch with the Pfalz D.III/D.IIIa, although they finally gained their fame flying different aircraft. Erich Loewenhardt of Jasta 10 was the most successful Pfalz D.III/D.IIIa ace with 14 of his 54 kills achieved flying it. Second to him, Karl Pech of Jasta 29, recorded all his 9 kills flying Pfalz prior to being killed in action.

The production of Pfalz D.IIIa commenced in May 1918 with some 260 D.IIIs and 750 D.IIIas delivered. Many serviceable aircraft were sent to advanced training schools during 1918 as the supplies of new Fokkers D.VII were intensifying, but some 100 Pfalz D.IIIas were still in frontline use at the time of the Armistice.



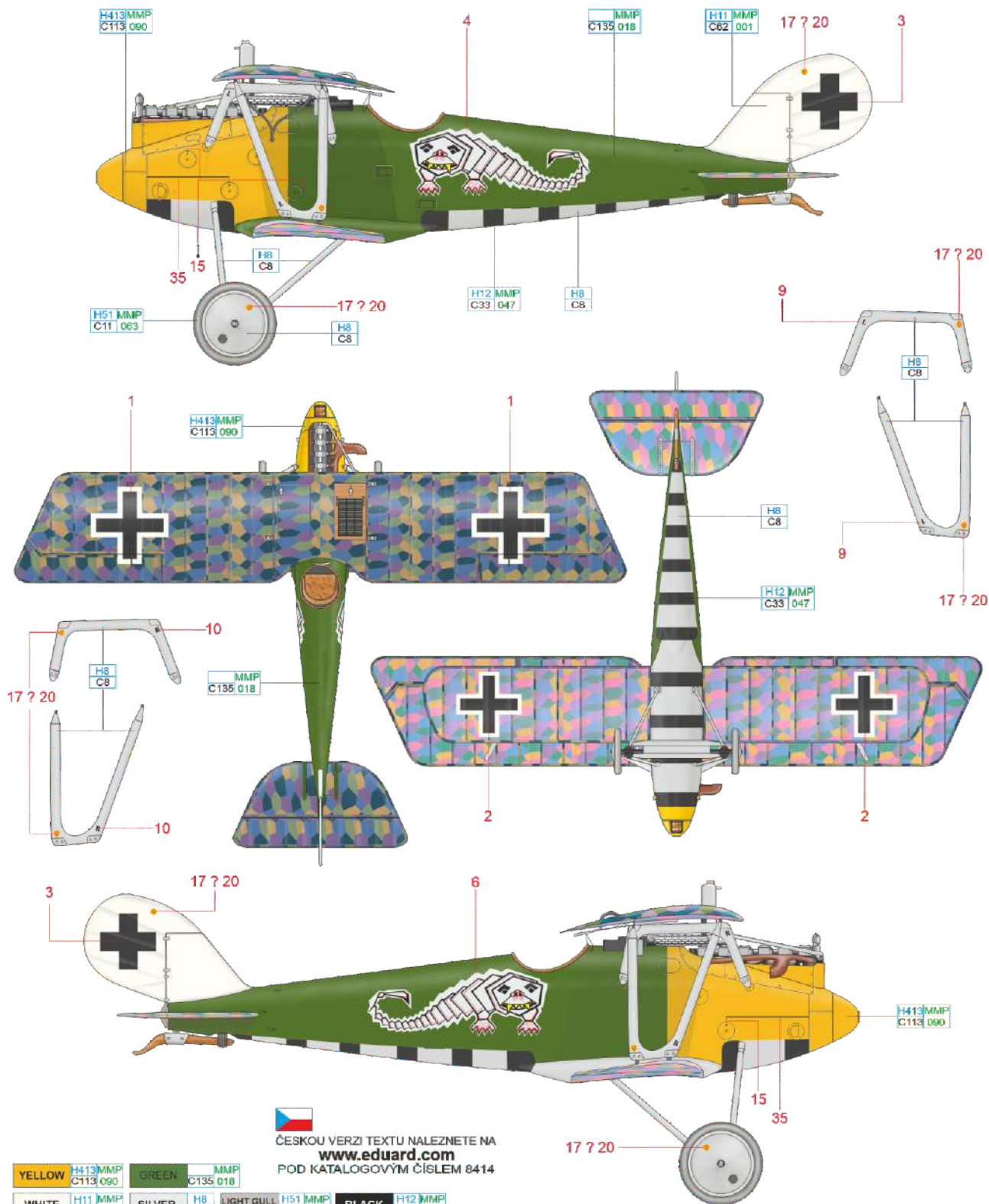
A**A**





A flown by Lt. Eugen Siempelkamp, Jasta 29, Gondcourt, France, July 1918

Eugen Siempelkamp started his fighter pilot career on March 22nd, 1918, when he moved from the Jagdstaffelschule II to Jasta 4. There he flew Fokker Dr.I. Just nine days later he scored his first victory, downing a Camel of No. 65 Sqn. It was his only victory with the unit, as he was transferred to the Jasta 29 on April 10th. There he added two more victories in July and moved again shortly afterwards, as he had been appointed the Staffelführer of Jasta 64. He scored two more victories there but was seriously wounded on September 14th. This prevented him to return to the action. His Pfalz D.IIIa had the usual green and yellow colours of Jasta 29 with black stripes painted on bottom of the fuselage over the factory silver "Schutzfarbe". Lower end of the original fuselage cross was slightly exceeding the line of the green demarcation on the fuselage painting. The wings were covered with five-colour "Lozange" Flugzeugstoff. Siempelkamp's personal marking was the paper dragon as Eugen got several paper dragons from his father's Chinese business partners as a gift when he was a child.

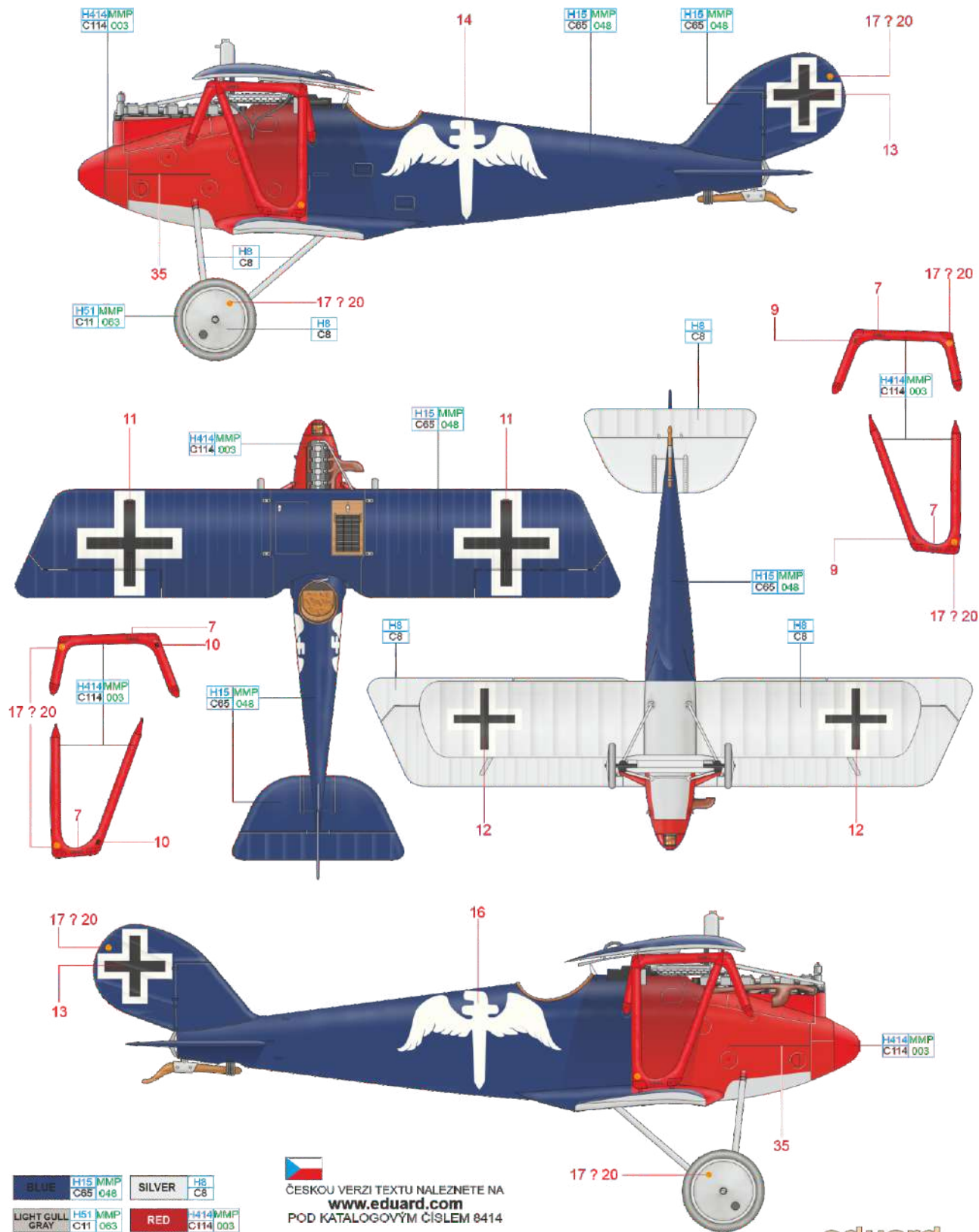


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YELLOW	H413 MMP C113 090	GREEN	MMP C135 018
WHITE	H11 MMP C62 001	SILVER	H8 C8
	LIGHT GULL GRAY	H51 MMP C11 063	BLACK
		H12 MMP C33 047	

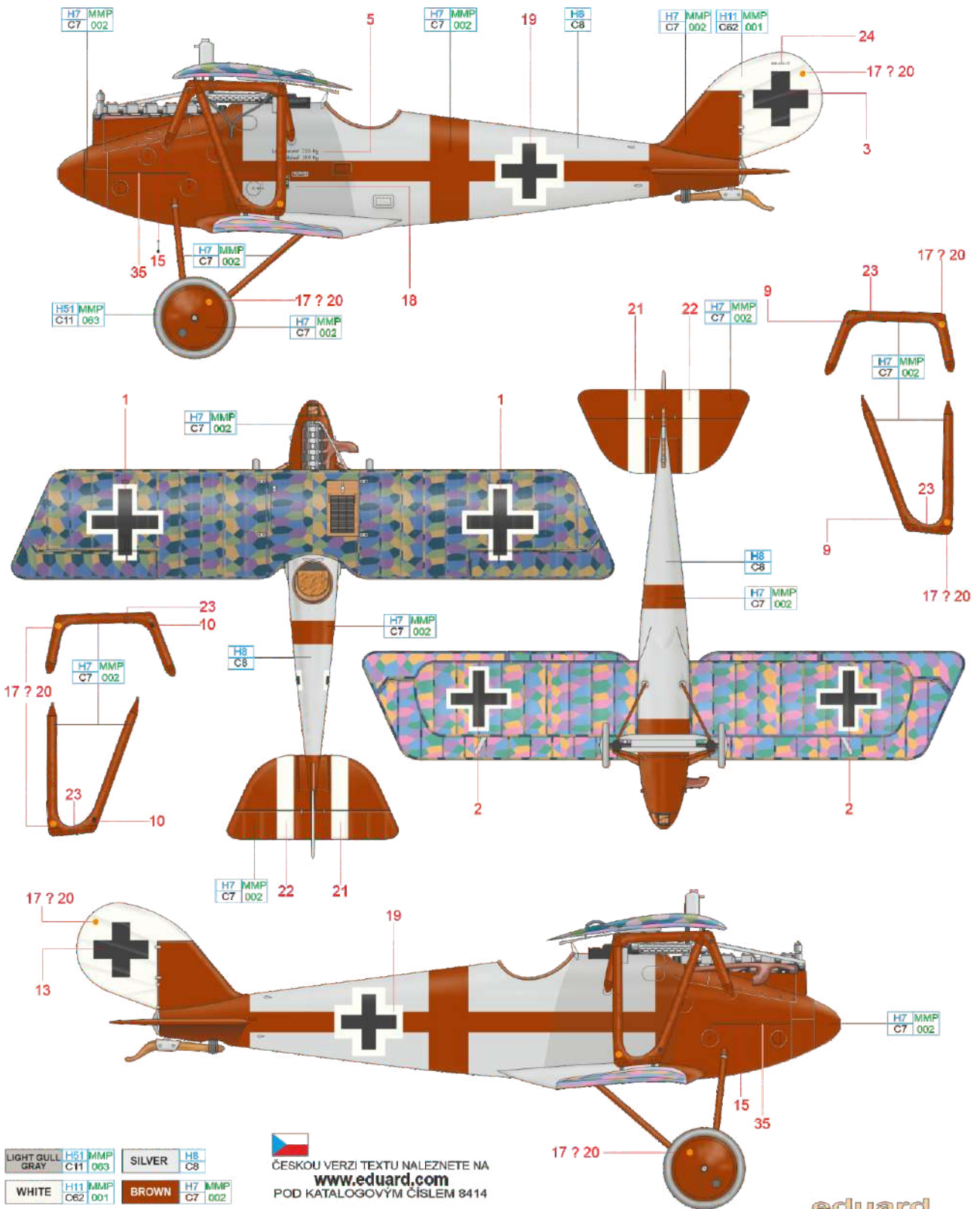
B flown by Hptm. Rudolf Berthold, CO of JG II, Guise, France, March 1918

Rudolf Berthold was one of the leading aces of the Lutstreitkräfte with 28 victories and leader of Jasta 18, when he was severely wounded on October 10th, 1917. He nearly lost his right hand and spent more than six months on convalescence. Shortly after return he was appointed as the JG II leader. Berthold led the JG II only on ground, unable to fly due to his paralysed arm, but the personnel was keeping one Pfalz D.IIIa for him, just in case the impulsive and extremely determined leader would decide to jump the cockpit and fly it to combat. It is possible he gave it a try, conducting some training flights with it, but the heavy controls of Pfalz were unsuitable for one-handed pilot. Berthold returned to aerial combat only after the D.VII's with their light and precise controls arrived and scored 16 more victories. This Pfalz D.IIIa had famous Berthold's marking of the white „Sword of Vengeance“. The upper sides of both wings were all blue.



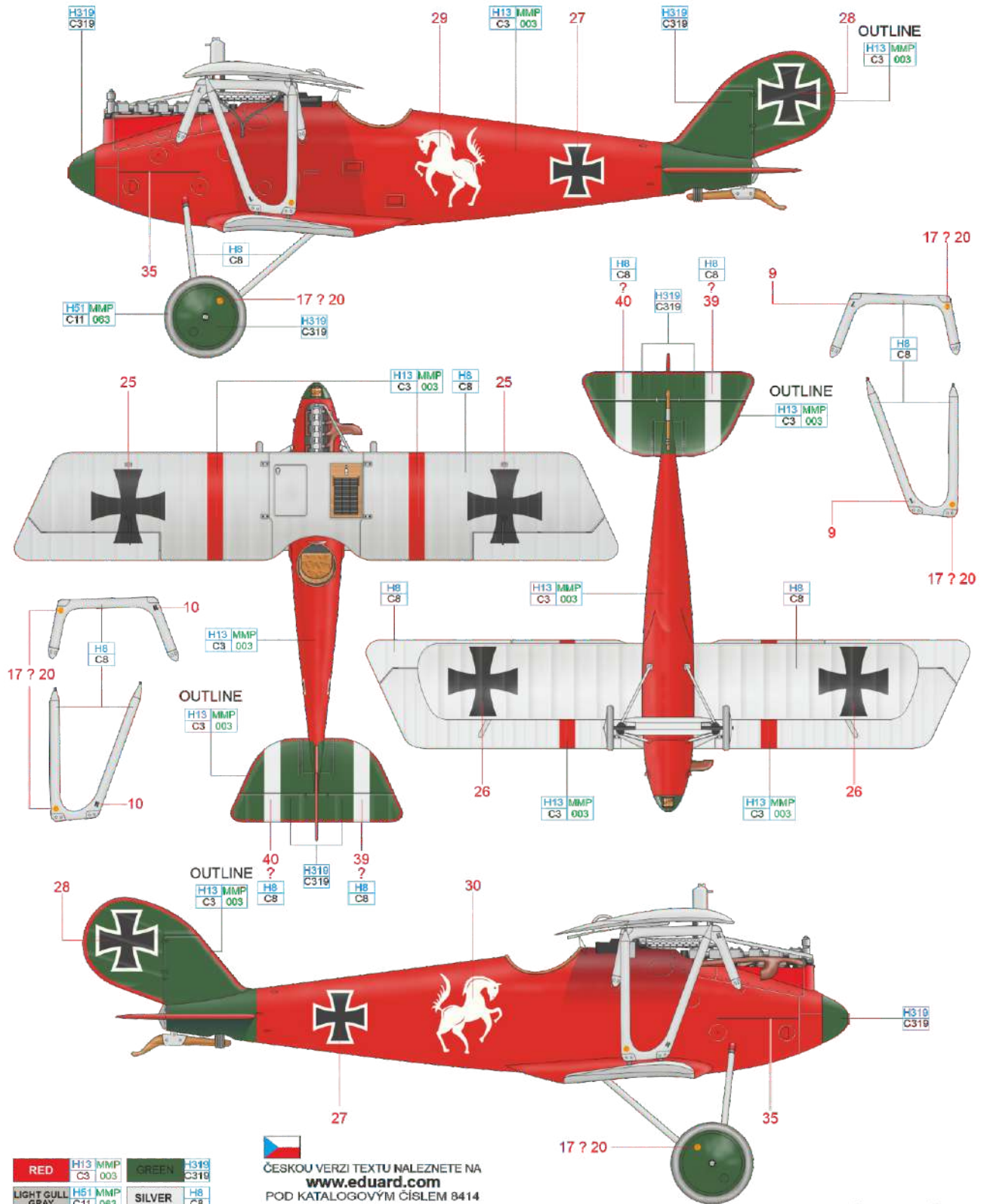
C 8244/17, flown by Gefr. Erich Mix, Jasta 54, Ennemain, France, June 1917

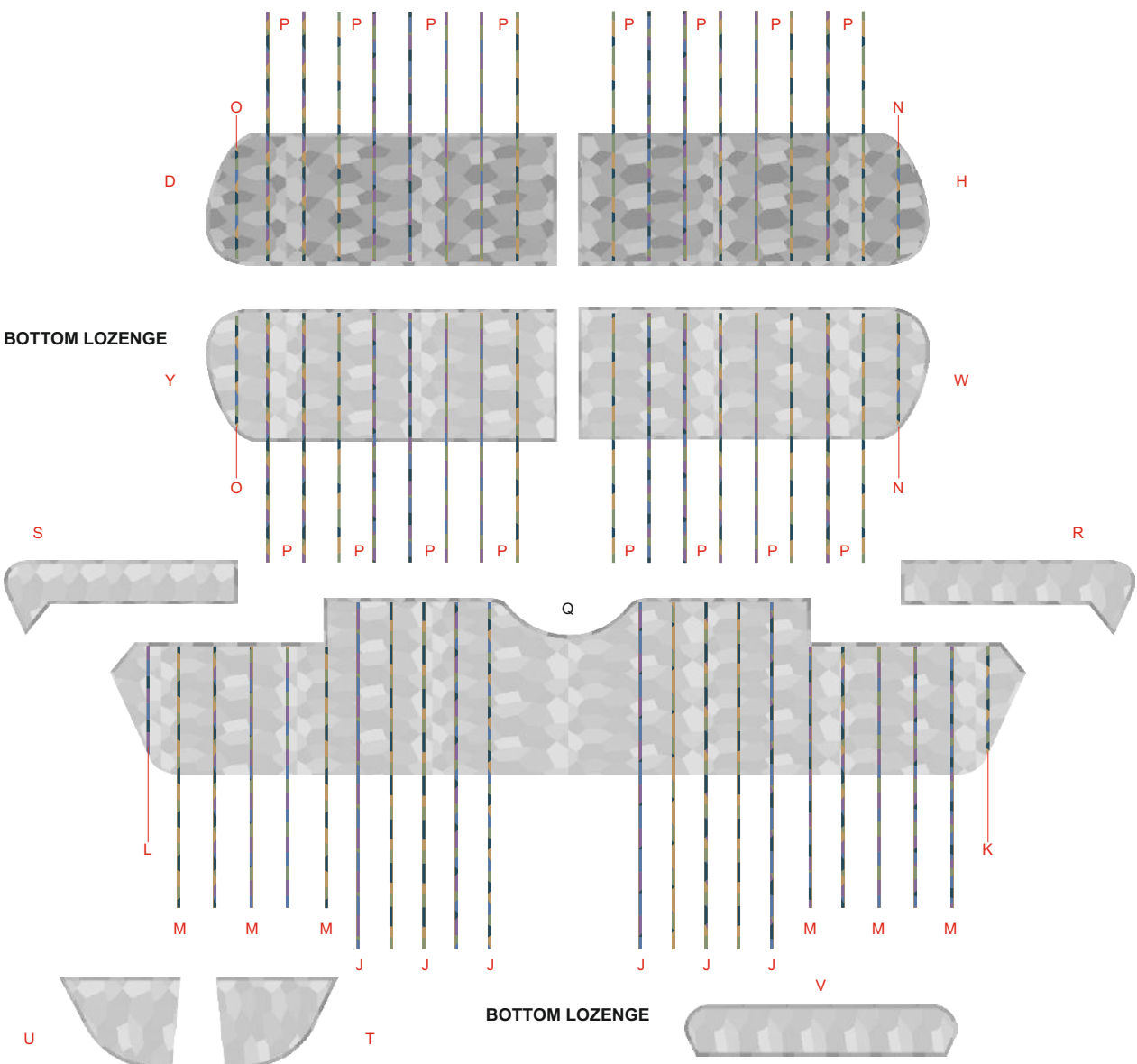
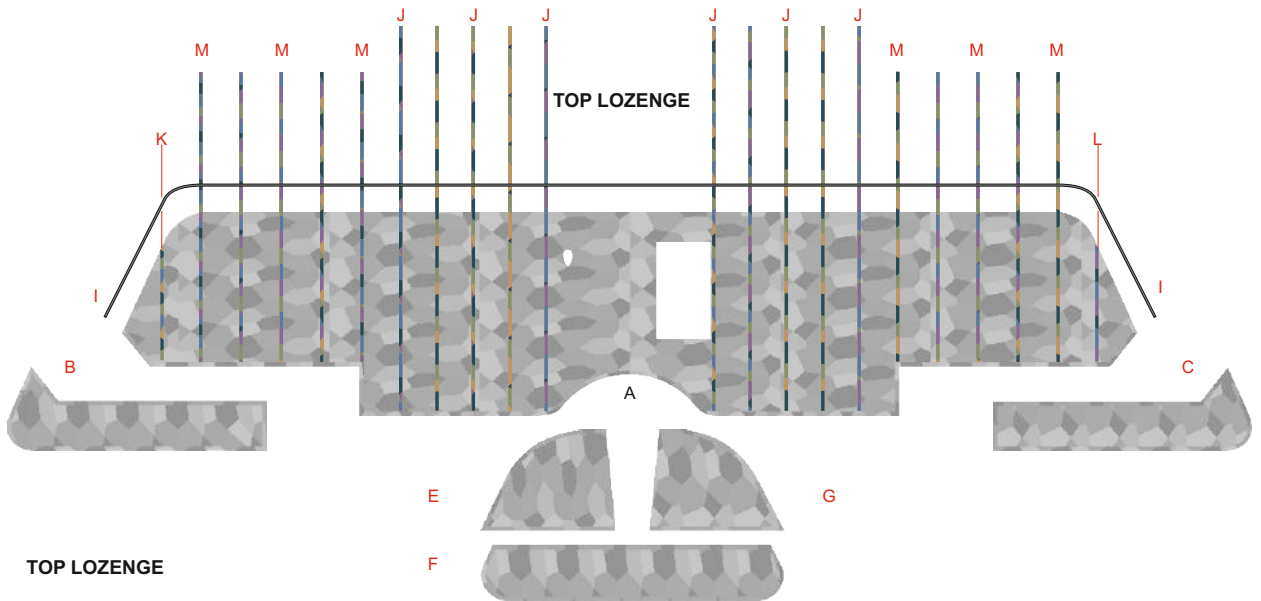
Former infantryman Erich Mix started flying with Luftstreitkräfte on May 1917, but only with non-combat units. On April 12th, 1918, he was transferred to the Schlachtastaffel 21 and a month later his dreams went true on May 15th, as he became a fighter pilot with Jagdstaffel 54. He claimed his first victory on June 11th, shooting down Salmons 2A2. Just two days later he destroyed this Pfalz on landing. Erich Mix scored three confirmed victories and one probable (balloon) during WWI. Mix joined Luftwaffe in 1935, became technical officer of I./JG 53 in 1939 and scored three victories at the outbreak of WWII at the age of 41. In March 1940 he became first commander of III./JG 2 and finished the war as Oberst (Colonel) with 5 victories (8 together with WWI). The marking of his Pfalz D.IIIa is a reconstruction based on the description in the flight log, revealed in the Jasta Colors book (Aeronaut Books, 2020). The fuselage had red-brown nose, rear and one horizontal plus one vertical band. The wings were covered with five-colour Flugzeugstoff (Lozenge).



D Jasta 5, Boistrancourt, France, spring 1918

This colourful Pfalz is a bit of mystery, as not too much is known about it. It was photographed in the hangar of the Jasta 5 in March 1918, when Manfred von Richthofen visited the unit at the Boistrancourt airfield. It is not known which pilot the aircraft belonged to. There is also a photo of the row of the Albatros D.Vs of the Jasta 5, where the aircraft sporting very similar prancing horse is clearly visible, standing next to the Richard Flashar's one. This may be flown by the same pilot, as the Pfalz and it had to be somebody serving with the unit from the July 1917 to March 1918. Royal Prussian Jagdstaffel 5 was set up on January 21st, 1916, as one of the first fighter units of the Luftstreitkräfte. Many famous aces served with Jasta 5 including Verner Voss, Hermann Göring, Josef Mai, Bruno Loerzer and others. With 253 aerial victories the unit was the third-highest scoring Jasta of them all. Apart of the red fuselage with green, red outlined tail and green nose, the wings were in factory silvery "schutzfarbe". Upper wing had also two red stripes from both sides.





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Renowned historian and author Bruno Schmälting completed this book with the cooperation of fellow researcher Jörn Leckscheid, a long-time friend of Eduard.

JASTA COLORS



Volume 1

BY BRUNO SCHMÄLTING
WITH THE COOPERATION OF
JÖRN LECKSCHEID

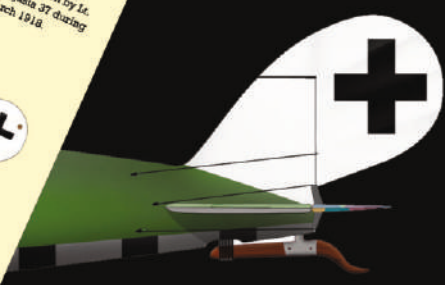
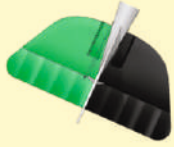


Jasta Colors Volume 1 subject by the world and sources on this color profiles, many more...

Phab D.IIa flown by Lt. Carl Barr, Jasta 51, mid-1918 >>

<< Albatros D.Va flown by Lt. Carl Heuserlein, Jasta 37 during February-March 1918

<< Fokker D.VII flown by Capt. Robert Blumenbach, Jasta 31, August/September 1918.



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