

One of the advantages of writing a column is the opportunities it provides to try out new products. One such product I have been asked to report on is MFA's Sport 500.

Having built this machine to report on its flying capabilities I am going to say very little about its construction, that is being covered in another article (see Beginner's Kit Review on page 42.) However I feel that I must say that construction is very simple and should not present any problems to first time builders. The kit is aimed at this market and Chris Baker, its designer, has done a lot of market research prior to its conception.

Basically the machine is very simple and it is simplicity plus ruggedness that is required in the learning stages of our hobby.

If you are buying your first helicopter then you need to decide if you are going to learn on fixed or collective pitch. There are any number of collective machines on the market, but should you wish to learn on a fixed pitch machine then your options are severely limited. MFA's Sport 500 is the ideal choice at what must be an ideal price selling at just under the £120 mark.

The model handles very well but like all fixed pitch machines requires a technique that is best learnt from the beginning. The delay time with this type of head is typical of all none col-

lective machines and is easier to get used to if learnt from the start. To learn on collective, and then revert to fixed pitch at a relatively early stage would be less desirable.

Early test flights of the model were somewhat frustrating, due to what turned out to be a faulty servo introducing glitching on the tail rotor, but having eliminated this fault.

I found the model to handle very well, it will fly very smoothly at under half throttle, climb out and directional stability are good, hovering is good, but I feel that this could be an area that the beginner will have to persevere with it or-

der to obtain the best from his machine.

All fixed pitch choppers have lag time in the hover mode, due to the time it takes the engine to increase the rotor RPM, at first you tend to misjudge the timing on the throttle and this causes a certain amount of porpoising in the hover.

My own early flights suffered from this problem, and I must admit that flying collective machines tends to spoil you somewhat, of course the beginner has the advantage of not having had previous experience with a collective machine.

Having had an engine cut due to lack of fuel, (yes fuel) I

will now turn my attention to its Autorotation capabilities the cut was at approximately 30 ft on a landing approach, and throttle hold did not help much nor did full collective pitch, but with this ship who needs them.

Damage to the field was minimal, beginners take note absence of negative pitch means no rotor RPM in the glide, means no tail boom strike on impact, in short, apart from a bent undercarriage NO DAMAGE not even blades.

Seriously though the one piece heavy duty side frame construction is ideal for the knocks the learning can impose. I have seen models fitted with Autorotation free wheels, sustain more damage on impact than this machine did without such a device.

MFA offer a very pretty Hughes 500E fuselage for these mechanics which converts the machine into a very neat stand off scale model. All this for under £200 represents value for money in my book.



## MFA is right on target as a first fixed pitch



Hughes 500E fuselage - an add on for the MFA

**MFA**  
BEGINNER'S KIT  
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